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The Boy Miners; or, The Enchanted Island.

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS.



"DAT 'ERE IS A LITTLE TOO LUBBIN'," MUTTERED JIM, TOILING LIKE A GIANT IN HIS BONDS.
"I CAN PULL, IF I CAN'T BREAK."

The Boy Miners;

OR,

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND.

A Tale of the Yellowstone Country.

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS,
AUTHOR OF "BILL BIDDON," "SETH JONES,"
"NAT TODD," "FRONTIER ANGEL," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

"THERE THEY COME!"

"YOUNG Edwin Inwood leaped down from the small tree in which he had been perched for the last half-hour, and ran swiftly toward the brook where his eldest brother, George, and a large negro, named Jim Tubbs, were waiting, ever and anon raising their heads, and looking toward the boy who was acting as sentinel, several hundred yards away, as if they were expecting some such an alarm as this.

"Quick! they'll soon be here!" he added, in his terrible excitement.

"How many are there?" inquired George, catching up his shovel at the same time with his rifle.

"I shouldn't wonder if there were twenty. I'm sure I saw a dozen, anyway."

"More likely dar's a t'ousand!" angrily exclaimed Jim, gathering his implements together preparatory to making a move. "Dis yer's a nonsence—jest as we gits in among de gold, dem Injuns has to 'gin dar tricks."

"Hurry, Jim!" admonished the young man, beginning to grow nervous. "It won't do to be caught here."

"Dey hain't cotched dis pusson yit, an' if dey undertooks it somebody 'll git hurt. I can swing dat pick kind o' loose when I makes up my mind to do so. I's ready. Now whar does ye pitch to?"

"Into the cave, of course."

George Inwood, loaded down with his gun and implements, hurried up the channel of the brook for several hundred feet, and then making a sudden plunge to the right, disappeared as abruptly as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. The next moment, his brother Edwin, a lad of some fifteen years of age, whisked after him, and then Jim came lumbering along, somewhat after the manner of an ox when goaded off his usual plodding walk.

"Dis yer's 'graceful!" he muttered, not deigning to look behind him to see whether the envious aborigines were visible. "I never did like to trot, 'specially when an Injin was drivin' me, an' only does it to please de boys."

"Come, Jim, move faster," called the voice of George Inwood from some subterranean retreat.

"Yas, yas, I's dar—"

Further exclamation was cut short, for at this instant the indignant African was seized by the ankle with such force that he fell prostrate upon his back, and despite his struggles and threats of dire punishment, was quickly drawn out of sight and hearing.

This was scarcely done when a dozen Mohave

Indians swarmed over the ridge of rocks and trees which bounded the northern part of the stream, and scattered here and there in quest of the gold-hunters, whom they had been watching from a distance all the afternoon. Each of them was armed with a gun, several displayed tomahawks and knives at their girdles, while the majority had large beautifully-woven and ornamental blankets thrown over their shoulders.

Running hither and thither, their sharp black eyes darting in every direction, they could not be long without discovering traces of the interlopers. A sort of halloo, something like the yelp of a large dog when a cow flings him over the fence, told that one of the dusky scamps was on the trail. Immediately the whole pack darted up the channel, and the next moment had halted before the mouth of a cave, the entrance being of sufficient width to admit the passage of an ordinary-sized man; but just now a large boulder prevented their ingress.

Certain that the gold-hunters were immured here, and were within their power, the Mohaves indulged in a hop, skip, and dance around the cave, flinging their arms aloft, and shouting continually in their wild, outlandish tongue. When their clamor had somewhat subsided, a gruff voice from within the cave was heard:

"Hullo! dar, I say! Hullo! I say! Can't yese keep yer clacks still a minnit when a gemman wishes to speak?"

The singular source and sound of the human voice had the desired effect, and instant silence fell upon all.

"Am dar any ob yous dat spoke English? If dar am, please to signify it by sayin' so, an' if dar ain't, also signify dat by obsarvin' de same sign."

Jim waited several minutes for a reply, but, receiving none, he became more indignant, and was about to burst out in a tirade against them, when George Inwood ventured to suggest that, as in all probability they could not speak the English language, as a matter of course, they were deprived of the ability of saying so.

"But dey orter to know 'nough to say *no*—any fool know *dat*," persisted the African.

"But how can they understand what *you* say?"

"'Clar'—didn't t'ink ob dat! What am we to do?"

"Defend ourselves—that is all that is left us."

"I'll go take a look at dem," said Jim, beginning to creep along the passage toward the mouth of the cave.

"I insist that you be more careful in your dealings with them. You ought to know what a treacherous and untrustworthy set of people they are."

Jim promised caution, as he always did in such matters, and Inwood kept close to him to see that he fulfilled his pledge. Reaching the mouth of the cave, the African gave a sneeze to proclaim his presence, emitted with such explosive vigor, that the Mohaves gathered around, startled as though the ground beneath them had suddenly reddened with heat. They recoiled a few steps, and then waited with some anxiety for the next demonstration.

Jim Tubbs had a voice, composed half-in-half

of those tones which are heard when a huge saw is being filed, and that which is made by the rumbling of the distant thunder. The judicious mixture made from these, it may safely be said, was terrific and rather trying to a sensitive man's nerves; and, as he was in rather an indignant mood on the present occasion, when he called to the Mohaves, it was more forcibly than politely:

"What does yer want?"

When a person has reason to believe that the one whom he is addressing has difficulty in understanding his words, he seems to think the trouble can be overcome by increasing the loudness of his tone. Jim repeated his question each time with greater force, until the last demand partook more of the nature of a screech than anything else.

By this time, the aborigines had obtained a view of the black face, cautiously presenting itself at the opening made by the partial withdrawing of the stone, and one of them, laying down his gun and knife, as an earnest of his pacific intentions, deliberately advanced to the entrance of the cave, and reached out his hand.

"Take it, Jim," whispered Inwood, "he means that as an offering of good will."

"I hope yer am well," remarked Jim, as he thrust his immense digits through the opening. "I is purty well, an' so am all ob us— Gorry-nation! what am yer at?"

The Mohave had suddenly seized the hand of the negro in both his own with tremendous force, and was now pulling with such astonishing power as slowly to drag the unsuspecting African forward.

"I tell ye let go," shouted the latter; "it won't do! Wal, if ye wants to pull wid d s chile, why pull an' see who am de best feller!"

Inwood, in his apprehension for the safety of the negro, seized his leg, and endeavored with his utmost strength to stay his forcible departure.

Jim was six feet three inches in height, and along his limbs was deposited an enormous quantity of muscle almost as hard as the bone itself; he was not quick, but he was a man of prodigious strength, and when he chose to exert it, there were few living men who could withstand it. If there could ever be a suitable occasion to exert it, that occasion was the present.

And Jim did call it into play. Closing his great fingers around the hand of the Mohave, he held it firmly as if it were thrust into the jaws of a Numidian lion, and then bracing his feet against the sides of the cavern, he said:

"Now, my 'spectable friend, you pull an' I'll pull."

At the first contraction of that muscular arm, the Mohave was drawn a foot forward; and, in dreadful alarm, he uttered a cry which brought several of his companions to his relief, and they, seizing him by his lower limbs, pulled as determinedly in the opposite direction.

"If yer gets dis feller back ag'in, I t'inks he'll be about a foot taller," muttered Jim, as he gave another hitch with the hapless aborigine, which jerked not only him forward, but those who were clinging fast to his extremities. They, in turn, united in a "long pull, a strong pull,

and a pull all together," with no effect, except to give the subject under debate a terrific strain.

"Yeave ho! here ye go!"

And with amazing power, Jim Tubbs drew the Mohave clear into the cave, beyond all reach from his companions.

CHAPTER II.

A BOMB-SHELL EXPLODES.

"Now you keep still, or I'll come de gold trick ober you!" admonished Jim, as he hurried the captured Mohave to the rear portion of the cave, and delivered him in charge of George Inwood and his brother.

"What do you mean by the gold trick?" inquired the latter, as he caught up his gun, and placed himself in an attitude to command the movements of the captured Indian.

"Why I mean dat— Hullo!"

Jim turned and darted up the passage, in which he had detected a suspicious noise. He was not a moment too soon. The red-men, furious at the abduction of one of their number before their eyes, had united to force away the stone, and, at the instant the negro returned, one of them had shoved his body half-through the opening.

"Out ob dar!" shouted Jim, as, with uplifted pick, he made straight at the intruder. The latter, fully panic-stricken, turned about and whisked out of the cave much more rapidly than he entered, his moccasins twinkling in the air, as if the same means had been employed to extract him, that had been used to draw his venturesome companion in.

The ludicrous appearance of the Mohave, as he scrambled out among his friends exceedingly pleased the ponderous African, who laughed loudly and heartily.

"Didn't fancy de way I swung dat pick round! I was kinder loose wid it, an' if I'd let it drap on him, it would've made him dance."

It looked very much as if our friends, in capturing the Mohave, had, to use a common expression, secured an "elephant." What to do with him, was the all-important question, now that he was in their power. Being without any warlike implements, he was comparatively harmless, and, as there was no escape for him, except through the passage by which he had entered, it was hardly to be supposed that, so long as he was unmolested, he would indulge in any performances likely to bring down the wrath of his captors upon him.

Withdrawing to the opposite side of the cave (which was not more than a dozen feet in diameter) he stood silent and sullen, while Edwin Inwood, with his loaded and cocked rifle, watched him with the vigilance of a cat. George Inwood, feeling that nothing was to be apprehended from the present shape of affairs within their subterranean home, passed up the narrow entrance to where Jim was, in order to learn how matters stood there.

At the moment of reaching his sable friend, the discharge of a gun was heard, and Jim hastily retreated on his hands and knees a few feet.

"Are you hit?" inquired Inwood in some alarm.

"Yes, but dey didn't hurt me; dey hit me on de head!"

"Can they not force back the stone?"

"Not if we can git close up behind it."

The negro spoke the truth, for, when immediately in the rear of the immense boulder, they could hold it against the combined efforts of any number of men on the outside, and, at the same time, keep themselves invisible, while, by remaining in their present position, they ran every risk of being struck. Consequently, no time was lost in creeping into the proper place, where, for the time being, they felt themselves masters of the situation.

Having successfully staved off all danger for the present, the question naturally arose, how was this matter to end? The gold-hunters were walled up in a cave, with plenty of arms and ammunition, little food and no water. The Mohaves, if they chose to do so, could keep them there until they perished from thirst or starvation.

Edwin Inwood soon grew tired of standing in his constrained position, and he cautiously set down his gun, within immediate reach, and then sinking down upon one knee, resumed the work which had been so peremptorily checked by the entrance of the captured Mohave. A large stone, weighing over a dozen pounds, was held firmly in position, while he employed both hands in drilling a hole into the center. This, as all know, is quite a tedious operation, and, although he had the usual tools of the blaster of rocks, he made slow progress. Still, he was animated by that great spur to exertion, necessity, and he applied himself to his task without intermission.

While his brother and the gigantic African were parleying and debating upon their situation, he succeeded in reaching the depth desired, and then carefully removing the debris, he thoroughly cleaned the cavity, as does the skillful dentist when preparing our molar for the golden filling. Into this hollow, the lower portion of which he had managed to give a globular shape, he poured several handfuls of Dupont's best, a piece of fuse all the while standing upright, while the jetty particles arranged themselves around it. Dust and sand were then carefully dropped in, until they reached the surface of the stone, when it assumed the appearance of a solid, honest fragment of rock, with the odd-looking fuse sprouting from its side.

"There!" exclaimed the boy, with a sigh, "it is done, and I think it will answer very well."

As he looked up, he still saw the Mohave standing quiet and sullen, but with his dark eyes fixed upon the young artisan with a curious expression, as though a dim idea of the meaning of all this was gradually filtering through his brain.

"What do you think of it?" asked the youngster, holding up the block of stone, with a smile at his own success, and at the whim which prompted the query. If the questioned had any idea of the meaning of the question, he did not choose to manifest it, but maintained the same stolid silence as before.

"I don't suppose it will suit you very well; at any rate your friends will be more astonished than pleased with it."

The boy called his brother, who immediately made his appearance. It took but a few mo-

ments to explain his scheme, which pleased the young man.

"It can do no harm to us to try," he said, as he picked it up and carried it to Jim. The latter listened to the explanation a moment, and his great eyes rolled with delight at the scheme.

"Fus' rate, fus' rate, almost as good as de gold trick."

"It is as good a time as any to try it, isn't it?"

"I s'pose so—you kin see dey're purty thick out dere."

Inwood produced a match and set fire to the fuse. It burned quite rapidly, like the string of a Chinese cracker.

"Throw it out as quick as it reaches the sand!" called Edwin from the cave.

"Golly, it's dar now!" exclaimed Jim, springing up, and preparing to toss it out among the Mohaves gathered outside. Unfortunately, his elbow struck the side of the entrance, and the bomb-shell dropped at his feet. Believing it about to explode, the negro ran back in dismay, when Inwood, with remarkable coolness, drew the huge boulder a little to one side, and, catching up the stone, swung it through the opening. Before the Mohaves could understand the intent of this, the terrible object burst into a thousand fragments, and with wild whoops of terror, the red-men scattered in every direction, as though they themselves were a portion of an immense bomb-shell which had exploded.

The success of Edwin's scheme, and delight of our friends were complete.

"Anybody killed?" asked Jim, and his companion peered cautiously around the edge of the boulder.

"I suppose not; but they have been hit and frightened almost out of their senses, and that will do as much good as though it had slain half a dozen of them. I don't believe they will come back again."

"Dunno 'bout dat; dey're a queer set ob darkies, am de Injins."

"I don't think from what I have heard, that these Mohaves are the bravest tribe of Indians in California, and they are too much afraid of us to make much trouble so long as we remain in the cave. And that reminds me of our prisoner—what are we to do with him?"

"Kill him," was the decided response.

"No; that will never do; we can not murder him."

"Let me come de gold trick ober him."

"I haven't learned what it is."

"Jes' come back where he am, an' I'll soon l'arn you."

Inwood was apprehensive that the "gold trick," so often referred to by his sable friend, meant something cruel, and he concluded it safer to restrain him.

"Never mind about it now, Jim; I have a plan of my own."

"What's dat?"

"Let him go."

"You don't mean dat?"

"Yes, I do; although he is our enemy, and although his own people are barbarians, who are none too good to put us to the worst kind of torture, if they had us in their power, yet, we are Christians, and cannot do such a thing."

"Dunno but what you are right; fetch out de feller."

"Besides," added Inwood, as he moved away, "it may change their feelings toward us. They know we have one of their number in our power, and, if we let him go unharmed, they will have less reason to look upon us as their enemies—this one at least will regard us as a friend."

The decision made, it was carried out without delay. The Mohave was led from the cave carefully along the passage toward the opening. He evidently believed he was being conducted to his doom; he was as sullen and stoical as his race generally are at such times. Jim had rolled the boulder back, so as to afford him free egress, and Inwood, first taking him by the arm, motioned for him to retire. The aborigine did not comprehend his meaning, when his captor turned his face toward the opening, and gave him a gentle shove. This was a hint which could not be misunderstood, and he darted out in a twinkling, and disappeared.

"Now, I will take a look and see whether there are any of them left," said Inwood, as he stealthily followed the liberated Mohave.

By this time it was growing dark, but objects for a considerable distance were quite distinct, and George Inwood made a thorough reconnoissance of the brook for several hundred yards up and down. At the end of a half-hour, he returned with the pleasing word that the Mohaves had taken their departure.

CHAPTER III.

THE GOLDEN GATE.

HAVING given this episode in the history of the gold-hunters, it is necessary to take a look at events which came to pass a few months previous.

One bleak day in the winter of 1857-8, a young man was walking slowly down Broadway, humming a mournful tune in a lively voice, and doing his utmost to keep up his spirits, which, just then, were at their lowest ebb. In the nature of things, the poor fellow could not be otherwise. While in the senior class in college, preparing for the ministry, and succeeding most brilliantly, he was summoned home to New York, just in time to receive his father's dying blessing; his mother having fallen asleep several years before, he was thus left an orphan, with a younger brother to provide for. As his father had been a leading merchant in the great metropolis, there seemed to be little difficulty in this, and he assumed the control of affairs at once.

But the mutterings of that financial storm were already heard in the sky, and it soon burst over the land, toppling old-established houses like so many ninepins, and carrying woe and desolation to many a hearthstone. George Inwood placed his shoulder to the wheel, and toiled manfully; but where so many thousands of experienced merchants were swept away by the current, it would have been almost a miracle had he been able to resist the whirling tide. Finding it useless, he threw up his arms, and went down with the multitude. When everything was gone, he found that he still owed his creditors many thousand dollars.

And so he hummed the lively air in his mournful voice, as he dreamily walked down Broadway, and asked himself what was to be done. He was poverty-stricken, with his younger brother depending upon him, and the big African, Jim Tubbs, who had always lived in the family from his childhood, with no means of support.

Naturally, a hundred schemes presented themselves, as they always will to a young man, when thrown upon his own resources. He might serve as a clerk—that is, if anybody wanted him, which was by no means likely; he might teach, if any school was in want of such a teacher as himself, which was equally improbable. He might do anything, if the opportunity were given him; but, during these "hard times," he soon learned that the worst possible place for a man out of employment, is in a large city. When he was turned away again and again, his heart failed him, and as he hummed his lively air in his mournful voice, he came to a conclusion which he ought to have made a considerable time before.

"I must leave New York; I shall soon starve here."

When he reached his lodgings, where his brother Edwin was staying, and where Jim managed to earn his own board, by doing odd jobs around the house, he called the two together, and proposed the oft-repeated question:

"Where shall we go?"

"Let's go to Quito," said Edwin, who had just been studying his geography; "they always have spring weather there, and plenty to eat, and so they have in several other places in South America."

"It is hardly the place for us, however."

"I tell you whar to go," said Jim.

"Where is that?"

"I's been t'inking about it for free weeks, an' made all de 'quiries possible, an' found out it's jest de place for us, an' dat's Californy. Dere's a man stayin' at this house now—his name is *Swill*—no, Mills, an' he's jest got back from Californy, an' golly! you orter hear him tell 'bout de country! It's awful splendid," added Jim, in his enthusiasm.

"It will be quite an undertaking to go to California, and we'll take a day or two to think about it," said Inwood, feeling at the same time that the Golden Gate was the door through which he should pass to comfort and wealth. In the evening, he walked out alone to think over the matter.

It being nearly ten years since that flood-tide of navigation had set in toward California from every part of the world, the charm, in a great measure, was now broken, and those who went there, did so, very frequently, for other purposes than to dig gold. Yet, Inwood concluded that if he went, it should be for the purpose of extracting the yellow metal from the rocks and earth. He was twenty-five years of age, his heart was set upon being a Christian minister, and he felt that if he ever intended to become one, even with the help which his church extended to indigent men, he had no time to plod up the hill of fortune.

But right here arose the troublesome question, how was California to be reached? He had but

little over a hundred dollars, barely sufficient to pay his own passage, without taking into account the necessity of carrying at least Jim with him, and the outfit which was indispensable.

But again, kind Providence smiled upon his project. After announcing his willingness to go to California, if he possessed the means, Jim Tubbs suddenly disappeared, and was gone for a couple of days. When he came back again, he was very important, and seemed as well becomes a man who carries a mighty secret in his breast.

"Doesn't make no difference where I've been," he said rather savagely, in response to inquiries of the slipshod, bulky landlady. "I's been on bis'ness—dat's whar I've been—on very 'portant bis'ness. Yas, ma'am."

The tubby landlady lowered her head, as does a cow when about to charge, that her spectacles might slip down far enough on her pug nose to allow her to look over them. Then she stared at Jim a moment in mute amazement.

"A black man off on business—never heard of such a thing," and she lifted her skirts rather gingerly, retreating from the apartment, leaving Jim alone with the two Inwoods at the teatable. The two latter knew that the African had some news to tell, and they forbore to question him, choosing to wait until he was ready to unbosom, which was just what he didn't want them to do. He waited and waited for them to inquire of him until he could wait no longer.

"Gorry'ation! why don't you *ax* me?" he finally demanded, in high dudgeon.

"Ask you what?" mildly inquired George, who saw that the secret was coming.

"Why, what I've got to say."

"How did I know you had anything to say?"

"'Caus' you *did* know it—dat's de reason. I's been an' seen Captain Romaine—mighty glad to see me. 'How are you, Jim?—how's all de folks?—how's George an' Ned getting 'long? Why don't dey come down an' see me?' Couldn't do much, stuffed me so full, I like to cracked open from my chin down to my heels."

"That's very pleasant, but had you your important business with him?"

"'Course I had—very 'portant, but you don't seem to care much about it, so I won't take the trouble to tell you."

If the curiosity of Inwood had not been already aroused, he would have left the African alone, knowing that he would burst, if compelled to hold his secret a half-hour longer. So he asked him:

"What was it, Jim? don't keep us waiting."

"Wal, the way ob it, you see, was dis way: Arter de captain had axed about my health, free, four times, I tells him what had happened, an' how we wanted to go to Californy. 'Is dat so?' he axed me, in a great flurry; 'how lucky dat are. Old Mr. Inwood was allers a good friend ob mine, an' I'm mighty glad I can do sumfin' for his children. I's captain ob dis steamer, Jim,' said he, 'an' we're going to sail on Saturday. Tell George, an' Ned, an' yourself to git ready an' sail wid me. I'll land you on de Isthmus, (don't know what dat am) an'

give you a ticket cl'ar to San Francisco'—dat's what he said, George—'clar' he did."

This was as pleasant as unexpected to George and Edwin, who expressed their delight to each other, and commended the shrewdness of Jim Tubbs.

"How came you to think of the captain?" inquired the younger.

"Wal, you see I've know'd him for a dozen years. When dat steamer used to run to New Orleans, ole Mr. Inwood got him de place ob captain on it, an' before dat, when Captain Romaine's wife died, an' he was too poor to bury her, ole Mr. Inwood done it all for him. Den gittin' him de place ob captain right arter dat—why, I tell you it was almost more dan de man could stand, an' he's mighty glad to do anything he can for his children."

"I'll go down and see him to-morrow."

"Yas, dat's what he said he wanted you to do—you go right off for he wants to see you mighty bad."

"He sails on Saturday, and to-day is Thursday. We must get ready to-morrow. Well, we can do that easily enough, as we are not going to take a fortune with us to California, and a few hours are enough to get our baggage together."

"Dar's plenty ob room on dat steamer. I tell you, she's a whisker, an' she can take a big lot ob people. De captain showed me frough ebery part ob it, an' it war a sight to see. I told him I shouldn't go, 'less he'd let me work my passage. He kinder laughed an' said, if I was so anxious to make myself useful, he'd find some little jobs for me to do somewhere 'bout de boat."

The next morning, George and Edwin Inwood went down to the wharf, and made a call upon Captain Romaine, who commanded the California steamer, "Golden Gate." The large-hearted captain was glad to see them, shook them both cordially by the hand, and, having learned how matters stood, from the loquacious Jim Tubbs, he soon put his friends at ease. They agreed to take passage with him on the following day, and then bade him good-morning. As they were stepping off the plank, the captain touched the shoulder of George, and motioned him aside.

"These are dreadful times, and I know it has gone hard with you. A man who is going to California, as you are, needs quite a pile to equip him. Now, my boy, if you need anything, I hope you will do me the kindness to say so; for nothing would give me greater pleasure than to do a favor for the son of the best friend I ever had."

Inwood thanked him, but assured him that he needed nothing. He felt that he could not receive any more favors at the hand of one who had already done so much.

On the following day, when the "Golden Gate" turned her head toward the Atlantic, and steamed swiftly toward her distant destination, she carried with her the brothers Inwood, and the colossal African, Jim Tubbs.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW ELDORADO.

THERE was a strong attraction which drew George Inwood toward the golden sands of

California, to which we have not even hinted thus far; but it is high time it received notice.

Several years before, when the young student had just entered college, he was descending the Hudson in the ill-fated *Henry Clay*. On board, he formed the acquaintance of the most engaging young lady he had ever met. Intellectual, vivacious and accomplished, he felt strengthened mentally and morally, when he left her presence—a condition far different from that in which one is sure to vacate the society of nine-tenths of the fashionable women of the present time.

A mutual interest sprung up between the two, and everything was progressing delightfully toward a tenderer state of feeling, when that well-remembered calamity burst upon the doomed steamer. In the confusion and tumult, Inwood, who was an excellent swimmer, became the means of saving Miss Marian Underwood and her father from death by drowning.

There can be but little doubt of the result of all this, had matters been left to take their natural course, but Inwood had just entered college, and the next tidings that reached him relating to the Underwoods was, that the father, who was quite wealthy, had removed to California, and settled quite a distance to the south of San Francisco. After deliberating a long time upon the matter, he addressed a respectful but friendly letter to Marian, and then anxiously awaited the reply; but it never came, and, concluding that her hand was pre-engaged he did not repeat his experiment, and did his best to forget her.

Absorbed in his studies and preparations for his sacred calling, he succeeded, not in forgetting her, but in preventing her occupying his thoughts so prominently, although this would have been impossible, had he known that the letter so carefully written had never reached its intended destination, and that the fair Miss Underwood often wondered and as often sighed that he did not seem to deem her worth the trouble of a letter.

But now that Inwood's attention was drawn toward California, the image of this lady constantly rose before him, and he found himself speculating, at all times of the day, regarding her. The great question was whether there was "room" for him in her thoughts—that is, the room which he wished—that which should exclude everything else. He resolved to find out her residence, and make her a call—his subsequent course regarding her to be determined by the reception he received, and her manner toward him.

The voyage to Aspinwall was without incident worthy of mention, as was the trip across the isthmus on the new railroad, which had been finished a little over three years. The journey was an unceasing delight to Edwin, who was just of that age when everything seen and heard make such a weird impression upon the mind. The broad, surging Atlantic, the vessels which skimmed like sea-gulls along the horizon's edge, the glimpse of the tropical islands, the majesty of the storm, the exuberant vegetation of the isthmus; these, and hundreds of other sights, made up a continual banquet for

him upon which the eye could feast and never become sated.

Captain Romaine presented each of them with through tickets to San Francisco, so as to be sure of reaching their destination without further expense.

They waited several days at Panama for the steamer which was to carry them the rest of the way, and when they went on board, found themselves greatly crowded for room and obliged to undergo much privation in the way of food; but they were as able to bear it as were the rest of the passengers, and were none the worse, when, on a bright morning in early spring, they landed in San Francisco.

The first step was to secure temporary lodgings, which was done without difficulty, and then, while Jim sat on the low porch in front of their "hotel," and smoked his pipe, George and Edwin wandered over the new city. The curiosity of both was, perhaps, equal, and the day passed rapidly away in gazing at this wonderful giant which sprung so suddenly into full-grown manhood.

By making careful inquiries, George learned that Mr. Underwood was settled to the south some fifty or sixty miles, and was one of the wealthiest land-owners and stock-raisers in that section—which was anything but pleasant information to Inwood, who would have much preferred to hear that they were in destitute circumstances—in order that he might call upon them, and feel himself upon something like equal terms. The information, indeed, seemed to make our young friend reconsider his decision of calling upon the Underwoods until he returned from the mines, laden with wealth, when he could have no hesitation in doing so.

Perhaps, if he passed within the immediate vicinity of Underwood's ranch, as some of the people termed it, he might seek occasion to get a glimpse or peep at Marian—but nothing in the world should induce him to do more.

George Inwood had about a hundred dollars—not enough to procure him the outfit he needed. He had brought three rifles, three revolvers and some cooking utensils with him; but he still needed digging and mining implements, cloth for tents—to say nothing of a horse apiece, and one or two mules to carry their luggage.

As a matter of course, it was out of the question to think of procuring these; and, as the best that could be done under the circumstances, he bought a rickety old mule, capable of carrying all that could be piled upon his back, and going like a clock when wound up, without retarding or increasing his speed, and disposed to walk straight over a precipice, if it happened to be in his way, unless he was gradually shied off by Jim Tubbs placing his shoulder against his, and forcing him to swerve from his course.

"Dat are beast'll carry all we've got to carry, 'cept ourselves, an' if thar's only room for us to get on, he'd carry us too," remarked the negro, when everything was ready, and they were about to start.

"Yes; he will answer for our luggage."

"And must we walk?" inquired Edwin, in dismay.

"I do not see how it is to be prevented,"

replied his brother, as cheerfully as he could speak.

"Why don't you buy free hosses?" inquired Jim.

"For the reason that I have not the funds to do it with. I haven't enough money left to buy the poorest animal, in the shape of a horse, that walks the streets of San Francisco."

"If you hain't, mebbe somebody else has!"

"What do you mean?" inquired Inwood, in perplexity.

Ah! wasn't that a moment of triumph for Jim Tubbs? How cool and deliberate he tried to be, as he shoved his great hands away down in his pantaloons pocket, until it looked as if he were fumbling at his shoe-string, and finally fished up a huge leathern purse so corpulent that it had very much the appearance of that humble kitchen edible known as the doughnut.

"Dar!" he said, as he flung it carelessly toward the amazed George Inwood, "mebbe dar ain't noffin' in dat! Mebbe dat's all counterfeit; mebbe Mr. Tubbs hain't been sabin' up his money dese five years! S'pose you look at dat—p'raps dar may be sumfin' or other in dar."

Jim leaned back against the column of the porch, cocked his old wool hat on one side of his head, shoved both hands down into his pockets, carelessly swung one foot around the ankle of the other, so that it was supported on the toe, and then, smoking his little black pipe, looked at Inwood as he opened the purse and counted out the yellow gold-pieces one after the other, until he had finished.

"How much do you make?" asked Jim, in the same style that he would have inquired the time of day.

"Four hundred and seventy dollars. Is this all yours, Jim?" inquired Inwood, hardly comprehending the pleasant truth.

"Shouldn't wonder now if I had sumfin' to say 'bout it."

The three withdrew to a more private place, where the money was again counted, and it was found to amount to the sum mentioned. Jim explained how he had been engaged in saving for the last five years, as he had an idea that there would come some "casion" like this. He was shrewd enough to keep its existence a profound secret until the crisis in their affairs, well knowing that Inwood would have considered that moment of necessity as at hand long before.

And so the three horses were purchased, and a number of articles which they needed, and leaving San Francisco, they took a southeast direction toward San Jose, and continuing on in the same course, struck a pass in the Coast Range near the 37th parallel.

By this time they were far beyond the limits of civilization, and traveling in a wild, savage country, where they occasionally met emigrants and miners, but more frequently encountered red-men and wild beasts.

California then, as now, was rapidly filling up, but among the mountains were thousands of miles where the foot of white men had never trod, and where, beyond question, the auriferous particles lay in glittering masses, only waiting for the spade of the miner or the rock-splitting powder of the blaster.

Before reaching the regions of the mountains, Inwood made careful inquiries, and learned that the residence of the Underwoods lay but a small distance from San Jose, and that, by a slight deviation from his course, he could take it in his path. He did so, neither his brother nor the astute African entertaining the slightest suspicions of the true object which drew him thither.

They caught sight of the large Mexican-looking building, with its low roof, broad wings, and extensive outbuildings, its vast droves of cattle and sheep, which were scattered here and there over an area of many miles; all these signs of the thrift and wealth of the owner, and it was with strange emotions that Inwood halted on a small eminence a short distance away, and gazed down upon the pleasant scene.

He saw no sign of life about the house. Here and there were to be seen one or two men passing hither and thither, over the hills or among the cattle, but the house itself was as still as death, and the thought once occurred to his mind that, perhaps, the proprietor lay cold and inanimate within those shaded rooms, or, perhaps, Marian herself was stretched in the robes of the tomb.

Jim proposed that they should honor the proprietor of this estate by spending the evening with him, but Inwood objected, and they encamped in an adjoining piece of wood. When everything had been made ready for the night, and the full moon had risen, Inwood left his companions and sauntered toward the house, his heart throbbing tumultuously with its varied emotions.

As he walked slowly by he caught the faint notes of a guitar, and heard a low, sweet voice humming a familiar song. He looked in the direction whence it came, and, through the interlacing vines, could faintly detect the form and outline of Marian Underwood. He knew it was *her*—he recognized the voice, and twice he paused and was about to enter the gate; but he checked himself by a painful effort of the will, and loitering as long as he dared in the vicinity, he turned on his heel and wandered back.

"When I return I will call," was the comforting conclusion he gave himself.

In a few days, by patient traveling and perseverance, they reached the eastern slope of the Coast Range, and found themselves in the San Joaquin Valley, where they intended to prosecute their search for gold. Carrying out their purpose of getting into a region where there was little danger of being disturbed by any of their own race, they followed the slope to the southward, keeping among the mountains, and guarding every movement.

They "prospected" a long time, and suffered at first for want of food, but they soon overcame this difficulty, and prosecuted their search for gold with greater vigor than ever. They had poor fortune for awhile, but they pushed resolutely forward, and finally came upon a small mountain stream, which contained an abundance of the shining particles among the sands.

Here they would have pitched their tents, had they not accidentally discovered a remarkable cave, which answered their purpose so well, that they carried everything within, and at

once made it their quarters. Their horses were tethered in a dense grove further down the stream, where they were visited once a day to see that all was well.

They had been here but a few days, when they discovered signs of Indians, and Edwin was put on watch, while the others busied themselves in "making hay while the sun shone." The young sentinel had been there but a short time, when he descried the troublesome visitors approaching along the slope; and what then and there took place our readers have already learned.

CHAPTER V.

WATCHING AND WORKING.

THE cave which offered such an opportune retreat to Jim Tubbs and the Inwoods, was one of those natural formations which are occasionally found, and which have more the appearance of being the handiwork of some skillful architect than of nature.

A narrow passage, sufficient to admit an ordinary-sized man, extended about thirty feet, when it opened into a broad chamber, which was lighted by several thin rents in the rocks overhead, they being so massive as to exclude all hope of ingress from that direction. The only disadvantage connected with this subterranean dwelling was, that during rainy weather, it required extreme care to prevent it being flooded. Occasionally, they were driven out in this manner; but there being a lower portion of the mountain close at hand, the water thus gathered, almost as speedily filtrated through the rocks into the outlet.

When George Inwood made his reconnoissance, after the departure of the Mohave Indians, he was confident of finding some of them dead, or desperately wounded; but, to his surprise, he discovered neither. He was rather pleased at this; for he had never slain a human being, and his teaching and tastes were utterly opposed to it. He more than expected that, ere he would see San Francisco again, he would be compelled to slay some of the troublesome aborigines in self-defense, but, until absolutely compelled so to do, he had resolved to abstain from it altogether.

"De next thing, I s'pose, am whedder dem hosses are wisible or invisble. I 'clines to t'ink dey're invisble," remarked Jim, when informed that the red-men had taken their final departure.

"They have been undisturbed," replied Inwood. "I took a look at them before I came in."

"Bress de good Lord for dat; I hopes dey will let dem animals be; for if dey tucks 'em away, we'll hab a mighty hard road to trabble to get back ag'in—carrying dem big piles ob gold."

"Ah, Jim, we haven't got that yet—"

"But ain't we getting it, eh? I s'pose I didn't get a pocketfull dis berry arternoon, did I?" he demanded indignantly.

"We have comparatively a small quantity, and there's no telling when that will give out."

"I t'ink it's gibbin' out all de time, an' if it only keeps on gibbin' out long 'nough, we'll soon get all we want."

"I hope we may, but I very much doubt it;

and come to think, I believe we have nothing for supper. How is that?"

"You're right—not 'nough to feed a 'skeeter."

"You ought to have done some fishing for us, Edwin."

"I would, if you hadn't put me in the tree, and set me to watching for the Indians."

"Dat is so," assented Jim, quite emphatically, "couldn't watch a fish at de same time. We'll have to go widout supper, an' den make up when we get de chance ag'in; dat's de way I ginerally fixes it. I can go a week widout eatin' anything, but I tells you Jim Tubbs 'gins to feel holler, an' he makes meat fly when he git de chance."

"We can then wait until morning."

By this time, it was completely dark in the cave. The three conversed together awhile longer, and then Jim, having finished his pipe, arose and said:

"I t'inks I takes a look at de hosses."

"You had better remain where you are. They are all right and you may get yourself into trouble."

"Ain't afeerd; who can git me into trouble? Jus' let me try de gold trick on 'em, an' dey'll be glad 'nough to cl'ar de track."

"You haven't told us what that gold trick is."

"You'll hab to wait now till I come back," said Jim, as he knocked the ashes from his pipe, "takes some time to 'xplainify de science of dat movement."

With which information, he made his way to the mouth of the cavern, accompanied by George Inwood, who gave him a parting admonition:

"Be very careful, for some of those dogs may be loitering around, and waiting for the chance to cut you off."

"I'll be keerful, ob course; look out for yourselves, an' don't let anybody in till you knows who he am. Some ob dem darkies may try dere tricks on you, an' you can't be too keerful."

"You needn't be afraid of my getting careless; you're the one who needs the most advice."

"Oh, I always *keeps dark*," laughed the African, with which profound witticism, he turned the corner of the cave and disappeared. Inwood waited awhile at the opening of the passage, listening and watching, but only the murmur of the brook caught his ear, and he could see nothing but the dark wall of bank which shut out his view beyond, and above these, in the clear sky, floated the full moon. The hour and the surroundings were impressive, and he remained a long time in a kneeling position, lifting up his heart in silent communion with the only One who then saw and heard him.

When he returned, he found his younger brother somewhat apprehensive at his continued absence.

"If the Indians should come down upon us when we are separated," said Edwin, "I don't think we would get off as well as we did to-day."

"No; if we hadn't this cave to retreat to, we should have seen trouble. As it is, I am a little anxious about Jim."

"He is careless, but he has been very fortunate. I never saw anything so strange as that

which happened to him when we were coming through the mountains. Don't you think that was strange, George?"

"Very Providential, indeed, although I did not see it myself."

"I did; he was only a little ways ahead of us, riding along on his horse, when those two Indians sprung out from behind the trees, not more than twenty yards off, aimed both their guns straight at him, fired, and then ran away."

"And never harmed him?"

"Never touched him; he said he heard both bullets whistle past his ears."

"It was very singular, but not unaccountable. His color and his size are such as to startle these superstitious people, and, no doubt, when these two aimed at him, their nerves were very unsteady, and to this alone their failure is to be attributed."

"Then he has been in danger several times since we have been here, and was scratched a little this afternoon—so he told me—but he hasn't been really hurt."

"He is a great help to us. I don't know what we could do without him. He can do more work in a day than I can in a week, and he has got to be a good shoot, too. We must arrange that, however, so that you can do the hunting for food, while we do the hunting for gold!"

"I am ready to begin at any time, and have wondered why you haven't set me at work before," said Edwin, with great animation, at the prospect of a day's ramble through the woods.

"It is with some misgiving, as it is, that I consent to this step. Remember you are very young, Edwin, and there is a great deal of danger for an old hunter in this part of the country."

"Not if he is careful, and you know I would be careful. I should always keep a sharp lookout for grizzly bears."

"They are dangerous enough, but not so dangerous as the red-men."

"But don't you think they are easily scared?"

"That may all be, and yet it isn't to be supposed that they would be much frightened at the sight of a youngster tramping through the woods with a gun on his shoulder."

"I will not wander off beyond call."

"You must remember that; for if you get lost, I don't know how you would ever find your way back again."

"I should follow up the stream."

"But do you suppose this is the only stream in the mountains? There are hundreds of such, and you would be a great deal more likely to get upon the wrong than the right one. I mention these facts, because I wish to impress upon you the great necessity of being careful. Boys are very seldom inclined to be thoughtful, and you are no exception to the general rule."

Edwin repeated his resolve to take good heed of what he did, and appealed to his record since coming into California in support of his actions.

"Yes; I am glad to say that you have, but I sometimes tremble to think of what we have done."

"You ain't sorry, George?"

"No; but I am frightened almost. Just to think that we are entirely cut off from the

civilized world, and it is known to these Indians that we are here."

"But they can't harm us."

"Suppose they took it into their heads to root us out, what is to hinder them? They could soon starve us to terms, and then do as they pleased with us."

"You seem gloomy to-night, brother."

"No; I do not mean to be so—I wish you to understand truly our situation."

"I am sure I do—but isn't Jim gone a long time?"

"Hark!"

Faintly through the still night air came the far-off exclamation:

"*Hold on dar! hold on dar! or I'll come de gold trick ober you!*"

CHAPTER VI.

A SUCCESSFUL CHASE.

WHEN Jim Tubbs issued from his subterranean domicile, he was rather too strongly inclined to act upon the report of Inwood, that is, it had been affirmed that there was no visible danger; he believed there was none, and, accordingly, he started straight for the tethering-ground of the horses and mule, to make sure that they had suffered no disturbance from the marauding Mohaves.

"Dat ar' place whar we put 'em, is de place dat I selected, an' dar's no danger ob dere being troubled while dey stay dar," he muttered, as he walked rapidly along, occasionally pausing to make sure that no one was following him.

"I always understood hosses," he added, as he approached the vicinity of the dense undergrowth. "Dar ain't many—"

He paused with unutterable emotion as he drew the bushes aside, and there, where they should have been, he saw them not! For a moment he was completely stupefied, and stood like one who, from the tangled web of a dream, endeavors to form the skein of coherent thought.

But he speedily recovered himself, and was sharp enough to comprehend that the animals must have been abstracted very recently, and were within the possibility of recovery. With a muttering exclamation of impatience, he dashed headlong through the bushes into the open space beyond, and stared around. Being at the base of the mountains, he was also on the edge of a broad valley, and the bright moonlight gave him quite an extended view over the broken, rocky country.

It required but one sharp glance of the African to discover, about a quarter of a mile distant, the three horses and one mule, making their way among the bowlders and patches of broken land, with all the deliberation with which they would have answered the call to work. Jim paused long enough to see that no one was driving them, when, uttering the exclamation which has been given at the close of the last chapter, he started on a full run after them.

With his usual thoughtlessness, he had come out without his gun, and was now running at his utmost speed, entirely regardless of his personal danger from the hubbub he was creating, and from withdrawing so far from his base of operations. There was something so singular in

a spectacle of these four animals leisurely trotting all over the country, that he ought to have hesitated and attempted to explain the matter before venturing after them in this open, boisterous manner.

It was observable, too, that, immediately after Jim gave the terrific outcry referred to, the slow trot of the animals increased to quite a brisk gait, a thing so unusual on the part of the mule, as to cause no little wonder on the part of the pursuer.

"Beats all natur'!" he exclaimed, as he struck his foot against a stone, and was almost thrown forward upon his hands and knees. "Fu'st time I ebber see'd dat ole mule raise a trot; split two, free rocks ober his head, smashed all de limbs off a big tree ober his back, but no use, couldn't get him off a walk, an' dere he goes now, swingin' long like a feller on stilts. Beats all natur'."

It was indeed so curious, that he paused to take a look at them. Just at that moment they were ascending a small swell; and, as they came in relief against the blue sky beyond, they were as plainly visible as at noonday. It was clear that none of them had a rider upon his back, nor was any one following, except him who was trying so valiantly to recapture them. What then was the explanation of this singular movement?

Jim, who had suddenly resumed his running, as suddenly paused, for he had discovered something.

"Wal, dere! if dat don't beat eberything! dar's an Ingin right in among dem hosses, or else dat switch-tailed mare has got six legs—one or t'oder!"

It would have required a good pair of eyes to notice this curious fact, had not the mare referred to at that moment fallen somewhat in the rear, when the singular addition to her means of locomotion made the usually large eyes of the African considerably larger.

The fact was apparent that a red-man was among the quadrupeds, and inciting them to their rapid gait by some outlandish means which seems to come natural to the aborigines, and which, up to this time, had escaped the attention of the pursuer.

Immediately upon this discovery, Jim broke into a fiercer gait than ever after the fugitives, shouting in his tremendous style:

"Drop that hoss, I tell you! Drop that hoss, or I'll make you!"

Inasmuch as it was hardly possible for the marauder to hold up one of the equine specimens, if he chose to tumble, it was not exactly clear how he was to obey this command. On the contrary, the animals, including the mule (which, having once got up a loping trot, didn't exactly comprehend how to stop it), increased their speed, and the indescribable whirring howl with which he accomplished it, reached the ears of the exasperated pursuer.

"Oh! if I only had a gun!" he muttered, as he jogged along, "wouldn't I pepper dem legs for him!"

At this juncture, the ground assumed a rougher character, and the animals were compelled to deviate to the left to pass a canyon, where the waters raged with such fury that the

shrewd Mohave did not attempt to force them into it. Observing this, Jim took the hypothesis of the triangle, and went sailing down the course in magnificent style, gaining so rapidly, that he gave utterance to a joyous shout.

"Cl'ar de track, or I'll run ober you! I's comin'!"

This startling intelligence did not have the effect expected, and the copper-colored gentleman evidently concluded that all was not lost, for he still maintained his position between the two horses, and, just then, striking a fording place, he tumbled them turbulently in, and, scrambling up the opposite side, renewed the flight in the same admirable fashion.

"Dat 'ere beats all natur'!" he exclaimed, in absolute amazement, as he witnessed the exploit. "Whoever dreamed dare was so much *go* in dat mule?"

The chase by this time had become interesting; but, if the Mohave had displayed some natural smartness in stampeding the animals, he now found himself at fault so far as regarded the mule; for this character, as he rattled down the canyon with a noise like the charge of cavalry, lost his unnatural gait, and, finding himself back into his natural one, it was impossible to change it under a furlong, seeing which, the charging body dashed forward with such a burst of speed, that the Mohave and his body-guard were compelled to leave him behind. Five minutes later, Jim vaulted like an avalanche upon the saw-like back of the mule.

"Now, ole fellow," said he, addressing the beast most affectionately, "show 'em what you can do."

But the mule didn't seem anxious to obey; for, although his enthusiastic rider thumped his sides with his huge heels until he nearly bounced off, the beast subsided into a moderate walk, as if he didn't exactly comprehend the meaning of all this uproar upon his back, and all efforts to change his gait were useless. A man in a great hurry has very little patience, and it took but a little while for Jim's to exhaust itself.

"You want de gold trick comed on you; dat's what you do, an' you jes' wait till I get you home."

Sliding off the serrated animal, he left him alone, and resumed the chase with greater vigor than ever. The few minutes' halt which he had made, were precious moments to the Mohave, who, still keeping his body invisible, had improved them to the utmost; but the roughness of the ground was against him, and the African gained rapidly.

"Ye'd better drop dem hosses while you got de chance!" he shouted, while he came sweeping down with great velocity.

A few minutes later, he observed a diminution in the speed of the horses, and finally they walked, and then stood still.

"You oughter s'rendered sooner, den I might been 'sposed to show you some mercy; but I don't know—Hullo! where be you?"

He might well ask the question, for, as he came in among the horses, there was nothing to be seen of the aborigine—he had taken the occasion quietly to slip away, when he found himself compelled to relinquish his prize.

Jim stared all around, but could see nothing

of him he sought, and concluded, under the circumstances, it was best to make his way back as speedily as possible.

"I t'inks I've run 'nough to 'arn a ride," he reflected, as he put himself astride the back of his own horse, and turned his head homeward; "an', as dat darky ain't anywhere's about, I won't wait for him."

When the nature of the ground would permit, he put the horses on a good swinging gallop, and in a short time encountered the mule walking leisurely toward him. Before this obstinate animal could be induced to take the right direction, Jim was obliged to get off his horse and press his shoulder against that of the mule, until he had described a half-circle, when he came round right, and was left to go without any other direction.

The rider exercised himself awhile in endeavoring to get him off his walk, but he speedily gave that over as useless, and rode ahead, well aware that so long as he kept a linear direction the long-eared animal would eventually come up with him.

It was not long before he struck the canyon, but at a point where it looked unsafe to cross. Believing himself above the place where he had forded, he turned down its bank in quest of it; but, after going fully a mile, discovered his mistake, and was about turning back, when he caught a glimpse of a broad sheet of water, and suspected at once that here was a lake into which the stream flowed. As the roaring, compressed canyon must end here, he kept steadily on, and soon halted at the view of a scene so beautiful and enchanting, that his untutored mind was filled with admiration.

The canyon suddenly spread out into a broad rapid stream, which flowed into a lake of about a half-mile in diameter. Under the bright moonlight, it had the appearance of "liquid silver"—an expression by no means original, but so literally truthful, that we can use no other—and in the still summer night there was not a ripple upon its surface. In the center rose a small island, so abruptly, that, covered as it was with vegetation, it had the appearance of a bouquet, and would have reminded a traveler of the famous Lakes of Killarney.

Jim noticed that the opposite shore was rocky and fringed with trees, and the lake appeared to stand on the edge of a large wood.

"Dat 'ere is nice!" was his reflection, as from the back of his horse he looked out upon the fairy-like scene. "What a good place dat would be for George to build a house. I t'ink we could run a bridge 'cross to de land, or hab a ferry-boat to run atween it an' de shore."

"Hullo! dere goes somebody," he added, as he saw a canoe put out from the shore to his right, and head toward the island. The full moon had now sunk toward the horizon, so that the shadow of the trees and island were thrown far out upon the lake; and, as the single Indian who impelled the canoe issued from the broad band of darkness which lay along the shore, every motion of his dusky, muscular arms was plainly seen. He managed his oar with such skill, that his body never seemed to incline a hair's breadth to the right or left. The flash of the paddle seemed born of the paddle itself, as

he held the point in the water instead of coming from his hand, as the tail of a fish is sometimes seen to move in the water, when its body remains motionless. The canoe sped forward without the least sound, but instead of halting at the island, Jim observed that it passed behind it, and immediately disappeared.

The African now drove his horse into the water, and crossed without difficulty. As he came out, he halted a moment to take a last view of the little gem which rose from the lake. The first glance nearly frightened him out of his wits; for, on the nearest point, he saw a thin, waving, arrowy point of light rise to the height of five or six feet, and then vibrate back and forth, as though held by a hand which oscillated from right to left.

While he sat amazed, a second flame, precisely similar, arose from another point of the island, and then another, and another, until fully half a dozen were visible, every one issuing from that portion of the island which touched the edge of the water. It was indeed a small representation of what Magellan, the great circumnavigator, saw in 1520, when he sailed by Terra del Fuego.

"I t'inks it's 'bout time Mr. Tubbs left dese parts," chattered Jim, as, with a shiver of horror, he started his horses homeward.

CHAPTER VII.

JIM had gone but a short distance, when, still fascinated by his great terror, he reined up his horses and looked back at the moonlit lake and the little island in its center. Could he believe his eyes? *Yes; it was moving.* He saw it slowly float toward the wood, until, unable to control his excessive fear, he once more gave the rein to his animal, and did not pause until he was far beyond sight of the lake and its Enchanted Island.

The negro rode a considerable distance, when, as objects around him began to wear a singular look, he drew his animals down to a walk, and, on the edge of a rocky grove of small trees came to a dead halt.

"Dis yere looks strange! I disremember dese trees; I's afeerd Mr. Tubbs is off de track, an' how is he gwine to git on ag'in, am de question."

The country through which he was journeying, was a broad valley, interspersed with streams and canyons, trees and open spaces, and huge boulders piled promiscuously here and there, and in some places so thickly strewn as to become almost impassable. There were acres where one could gallop as free as upon the beaten road, and then, for the same distance, it was the utmost that a horseman could do to pick his way along.

In the hurried manner in which Jim had made headway across the desolated tract, it was not to be supposed that he entertained a very vivid recollection of the landmarks; but he had quite a memory of places, and after he had rested his animal for a few moments, he became certain that he was lost. Under these circumstances, his only resource was to fall back on general principles, and take the course which he believed would eventually lead him to the neighborhood of the cave,

By carefully studying the position of the moon, he believed he was going too much to the south, and, turning to the right, he followed this course at a slow walk, watching carefully for some landmarks which could be recognized. Discovering none, and it being well on toward midnight, he checked his horses, with the intention of waiting until morning.

Jim was pretty tired, and, tying the horses together, he lay down on the ground beside a rock, and in a few moments was asleep. He was undisturbed until daylight, when he was awakened in a manner which brought a howl of terror from him.

Some crushing weight descended upon his foot, and, starting up, he gazed about him for the cause. It proved nothing less than the baggage mule so frequently referred to, which, in journeying straight forward in the path which he had been started upon, had thus come directly upon the sleeping African.

"What!" he shouted, placing himself directly in front of the animal, and checking him in the same manner that a wall of rock would have done. "Dat 'ere is queer!" he laughed, "dat I put myself right afore you. Shouldn't wonder now if you was on de right track; leastways we'll try you."

The mule was fired up, and, as it moved on again, the negro followed on the back of his own horse. To his great surprise and gratification, he had gone but a short distance when he caught sight of a small clump of trees which he recognized as a point passed by him shortly after he had started in pursuit of the Mohave and his prey.

He was highly pleased at this, and pressing on until he had reached the grove, became convinced that he was on the right track, and would rejoin his friends in the course of an hour. Beyond that spot all was familiar, and he advanced without hesitation or misgiving. Reaching the point where their animals had been tethered, he drew them in among the trees, and, first securing them, started out in quest of his friends.

Jim had walked but a few yards, when it suddenly occurred to him, as he recalled the previous night's experience, that there might be danger in advancing so openly to the cave. It was a very easy matter for a party of aborigines to conceal themselves along the banks and rush upon and secure him before he could help himself.

It struck him, too, as he approached the cave, that an unnatural stillness reigned around it. The sun was now up, and it was high time that his friends were bestirring themselves. A vague fear took possession of the African, as he halted some rods away, and looked furtively about him. Everything was so quiet—nothing moving except the stream, and that made scarcely a ripple as it glided over its sandy bed.

Jim was standing in this apprehensive state when a slight noise in the rear startled him. Turning his alarmed gaze, he expected to behold a whole troop of painted red-men about to swoop down upon him; but, in the place of that, recognized the smiling face of young Edwin Inwood.

"Bress me, but you scart dis chile dat time!" said Jim, his teeth fairly chattering at the remembrance of his shock.

"I threw a stone to let you know I was near; I didn't mean to frighten you."

"It wasn't de stone dat scart me, it was de thought dat I t'ink it was sumfin' else. Whar's George?"

"Inside the cave."

"Had breakfast?"

"No; we were just going to prepare it. Here he comes!"

At this moment George Inwood made his appearance above-ground, and he greeted the negro with great gladness. The latter soon gave an account of his pursuit and capture of the horses, and his safe return with them.

"You have done very well, Jim, especially when we remember that you had no gun with you. There are few men who would have dared to do so, even when fully armed."

"But, dat ain't all," added the colored man, as he heaved a great sigh. "I seen de most awfulest t'ing you ever heard tell on."

In answer to their anxious inquiry, he gave what has already been given by us, winding up with the declaration:

"An' when I looked back de last time, what do you s'pose I seen? Why, I seen dat island rise up, flap its wings, an' fly away!"

"There, Jim, that's a little too much," laughed the elder Inwood.

"When it flapped its wings didn't it also crow?" asked Edwin, whose interest in the narrative was turned into equally intense amusement at this culmination.

"You folks can laugh," retorted Jim, indignantly, "but wait till you see what I did, an' de shivers will run all ober you."

"It may be possible that it was a *mirage*," said George, somewhat impressed by the earnest manner of his sable friend.

"A *mirage* by moonlight?" inquired Edwin.

"Such things have been heard of, I believe, although very rarely."

"What's a *mirage*?" inquired Jim.

By great perseverance, George succeeded in giving Jim a sort of an idea of what he meant, although in all probability he would have regarded the *mirage* itself equally mysterious and wonderful as the bodily exit of a *bona-fide* island before his eyes.

"All I got to say is, you jes' go an' see it, an' den you'll stop laughing at dem as what undertakes to explainify it to you."

"Perhaps we shall have the opportunity, as I have concluded to leave these quarters."

"What fur?"

"In the first place, our safety demands it. The Indians have found out we are here, and they will hover about and watch us, until some time they will pounce down upon us before we know it."

"What ob dat? Didn't dey do it last ebening?"

"Yes, and providentially we were able to drive them off; but you can see that if a hundred of them were to come down here, they could keep us in the cave until we died of thirst and starvation, or were compelled to surrender, and our end in each case would be the same."

"But we hadn't orter leave de gold jus' as we 'gin to find it."

"We shall leave a very small quantity of it

behind. The supply has about run out. You remember that we had a small lot yesterday. The reason was that we had gathered about all there was, and so you see there is nothing to keep us here, while we have every inducement to draw us away."

As this was undoubtedly the case, there was no gainsaying the argument of Inwood, and it was decided to move their quarters without further delay. Breakfast was prepared, during which Edwin took his station and kept a sharp watch for straggling Indians. None were discovered, and he descended and joined them in the morning meal. Their baggage was piled on the mule, the five tiny sacks which contained the yellow dust were taken in charge by George, and while it was yet early in the day, they took up the line of march.

Very appropriately, Jim led the way, he riding his nag with all the dignity of a conqueror at the head of his army. Inwood was not so particularly anxious to see the Enchanted Island, as to make sure that no Mohaves were following them. The most vigilant scrutiny failed to detect any of the dreaded creatures, and our friends finally ventured to believe that with due prudence they could reach a place of safety.

"Dere!" said Jim, pointing off to the east, "is de lake an' de island."

The beautiful, circular sheet of water lay a half-mile away, and right in the center was an island about fifty feet in length, and half that distance in breadth. It was covered with young trees and dense vegetation, and in the bright sunlight had a cool, fresh appearance, which made it still more pleasant than when viewed under the witching rays of the moon.

George Inwood produced a small spy-glass from his pocket, and scanned it long and narrowly. There was something about this little island, aside from the marvelous stories related of it by Jim, which awakened his curiosity. While apparently still and devoid of life, he saw signs which convinced him that more than one person was upon it.

In among the leaves he could detect a fluttering, tremulous motion, and around the edge of the island were ripples which must have been caused by human hands, as the surface of the lake in every other portion was as smooth as a mirror. He thought he heard once or twice a plashing sound, which came either from the island itself, or from directly behind it. He decided to say nothing of his suspicions until he had learned more of what certainly wore a singular look, to say the least.

He was on the point of lowering his glass, when a slight movement among the bushes on the eastern shore of the lake caught his eye, and he immediately directed his gaze toward that point.

The naked vision would have discovered nothing, but by the aid of the lens he discovered a man standing on the very edge of the wood, and scrutinizing the party. At first glance, he took him to be an Indian, but a continued examination satisfied Inwood that the stranger was a white man, dressed and painted as a red-man. What gave this impression was the fact that his outfit was not complete, being deficient

about the head. This, instead of being bare, with the long, wiry black hair stained and ornamented with eagle-feathers (as is the custom of the Mohaves and Apaches), was surmounted by a slouched hat which entirely concealed the short hair.

The painted white man gazed long and intently upon the party, from which fact Inwood judged that he was displeased at their appearance, and anxious to keep himself invisible. This, united with the curious facts noted regarding the appearance of the island, furnished food for speculation, and Inwood lowered his glass and placed it away with the conviction that there was some mystery connected with this lake and the tiny island resting in the center, which, perhaps, it might be well for him to attempt to fathom.

"What you t'ink ob him?" inquired Jim, much wondering at the continued silence of Inwood.

"It is the finest scene I have ever looked upon. Nothing could be more beautiful than the lake, and the island, and the green shores which surround, and the white mountain peaks away in the distance."

"Wait till you see it fly away—den I guess you t'ink it beautifuller yet."

"I am afraid I shall have to wait a good while," said Inwood.

"Shall we go on?" inquired Edwin.

"I rather like the appearance of the country around here, and I think we are as likely to find gold as in any other place. We will hunt up some good spot, take up our quarters, and go to prospecting. The best plan, I think, is for us to turn square around and start back again."

"What dat for?"

Edwin, too, looked an inquiry, but George said he had a good reason, and accordingly it was done.

CHAPTER VIII.

A LURKING FOE.

THE party turned about as if to retrace their steps; but the moment they had descended the hill, so as to be out of sight of the Enchanted Island, Inwood dismounted, and said to his friends:

"Now, you walk the horses as slowly as you can, and when you get beyond that grove of trees, wait for me, but don't halt until you are there."

Jim and Edwin looked wonderingly at him, but he waved them impatiently away, and trailing his rifle, ran rapidly around the brow of the hill from which he had taken his view of the lake, and gaining a position where he could still see it, he screened himself from observation, and carefully awaited the confirmation of his suspicions.

He had been here about twenty minutes, when he observed an agitation in the bushes between the hill and the lake, and the next minute the head and shoulders of a man rose to view. One glance identified him as the individual whom he had surveyed through his telescope, and it is hardly necessary to say that our young friend watched his motions with intense interest.

Looking cautiously about him, as if to satisfy himself that he was unobserved, the stranger soon came fully to view, and commenced ascending the hill with a silent, cautious step. Reaching a point almost to the summit, he sunk down on his hands and knees, and looked over. Watching the horsemen, who by this time, were a third of a mile distant, for a few moments, he laid his rifle across a mound of earth, and took a long, deliberate sight.

Inwood felt very uncomfortable as he watched this operation, and he was on the point of bringing his own gun to his shoulder to prevent this murder, when the piece was discharged, and, glancing at his friends, he saw that they were not disturbed enough to cause them to look around.

"Try it again!" muttered Inwood, "that is rather too long a range for a gun like yours."

The man, after the failure of his piece, took an upright position, and watched the horsemen with an intensity of gaze which showed that for some reason or other, he had a deep interest in their movements. Finally they rode behind the grove referred to, and the man, with a great sigh and some muttered words, turned on his heel and descended the hill.

"That man, for some reason or other, doesn't wish any visitors in these parts," was the reflection of Inwood, "and he has a special objection to white men. There is some connection between what I have seen and that island out in the lake."

Having learned all that he deemed it safe to learn, he carefully made his way out of his hiding-place, and soon after rejoined his friends behind the grove. Jim had had some difficulty in controlling the actions of the mule, but he had succeeded at last in bringing him to a stop by shying him against the trunk of a tree, as he swung round his circle.

"Dat's de way to put de brakes on," said Jim; "no danger ob de wheels slippin'—fotched him up *chock*!"

"I suppose you didn't understand what I meant," remarked George, as he resumed his horse, "but I discovered a man watching us, and I wanted to watch him a little."

"Did you see him?"

"Yes; but I took good care that he didn't see me. You heard a gun fire shortly after you left. That was done by him, and he took deliberate aim at you, but the distance proved too great."

As might be expected, this announcement created quite a sensation.

"He is a white man," added George, "although he is disguised as an Indian. Why he should do so, I cannot understand, but I suspect he does not want any one to know that there are white men in this vicinity. It might draw others here, to which he appears to have a strong objection."

"It has sumfin' to do wid dat 'ere island!" asserted Jim.

"I believe you are correct."

"An' dere is *spooks* about, so de best t'ing we can do is to trabble. I—I—I—don't t'ink de air around here 'grees wid me."

"We must find a suitable place to settle down here for a few months, or at any rate, until I

understand the mystery about this Enchanted Island."

"Jus' as you says; I don't care about Ingins, for I can come de gold trick ober dem, but I don't like *spooks*."

"Can't you serve them the same way?"

"No; dey won't hold still; dey is always on-easy, an' den I's afeerd ob 'em."

"They have never harmed any one as yet."

"But dey will carry you off—dat's what dey will do."

"Do you think we are going to find any gold?" inquired Edwin.

"We may and we may not; the chances are equally good in almost any place in this section."

"I suppose there is plenty of hunting?"

"Yes; and we will let you range the woods. Jim may look for gold, while I keep my eye on this island. I think we shall all find enough to interest us."

"I's no 'bjection, so long as I don't have to hunt *spooks*," replied the negro.

"It seems to me," continued George, pointing to the south, "that off yonder must be a good place for our camping-ground. Suppose we make a search there?"

"Dat's good," said Jim, with a pleased countenance, "don't you see dat de mule has got his head turned dat way? Jus' wait a minute."

The animal was shoved a little to one side, so as to go clear of the tree, when he instantly started off on his long loping walk, while the rest followed.

The point indicated by George Inwood was a mile away, and when they reached it, they found themselves on the border of a large wood, with an undergrowth of almost impenetrable density. A small stream of clear cold water gushed silently forth; and, following up the pebbly bed of this for several yards, they made an abrupt turn to the right, when they fixed upon their camping-ground. A small space was cleared off, and their tent erected, when they made search for a grazing ground for their horses. This was found without much difficulty, and, by the middle of the afternoon, they were fairly settled in their new quarters.

They had enough provisions to give them a meal, when they all lay down to rest and chat over matters.

"To-morrow, Edwin, you start on your hunt," said George, "and, as we are in a totally new country, you must use extra caution."

"What shall I bring you?" asked the young hunter, "a grizzly bear or an antelope?"

"I prefers an antelope," replied Jim, "an' if you come across a grizzly b'ar, you'd better take my advice an' give him a wide berth."

"Yes; fire your gun only when it is necessary; don't be tempted aside by any wish for sport, or any ambition to become a great hunter."

Edwin had received this advice so often that he did not see the necessity of its being repeated. He could only repeat his intention to be prudent and careful, as he had been at all times.

"As we have several hours of daylight before us," continued Inwood, "suppose we make a reconnoissance of the lake?"

"Dat 'ere will suit me," replied Jim. "I want you to see dat island fly away. I know you won't b'lieve it till you see it."

"That I certainly shall not; you will go with us, Edwin?"

"I would rather take a ramble in another direction, if you are willing."

"Certainly; try and be in before dusk. Come, Jim, if you are ready."

They stepped into the brook, and, walking on the hard, pebbly bed, soon emerged into the open, rocky country, about a mile distant from the lake.

"Now, Jim," said Inwood, "we must be particularly cautious. There are other white men in this neighborhood, and I am sure if they knew we were here, they would as lief kill us as not, to get us out of the way."

"S'pose so; but den what would *we* do all dat time?" was the surly demand of the African. "While dey was doing dat, we'd have de chance to try de *gold trick*. I would just as lieb see dem as not—a little lieber, I t'ink."

"I would not; if we can get along without trouble, it is our duty to do so, and I particularly request you to be cautious in your movements. The man that I watched has already fired his gun at us, and if he can steal up within a hundred feet, it isn't likely he'll make such a miss as he did awhile ago."

"Hang em! what do dey wish to shoot us for?"

"That's the question which I wish to settle."

"An' what does he want to make hisself look like one ob dem darkies for, 'stead ob being 'spectable?"

"It is all curious, Jim, but I have hopes that we may penetrate the mystery before long."

All this time the two men were carefully making their way toward the lake, both of them constantly gazing about them to discover any signs of danger. Inwood saw nothing, and was about to congratulate himself upon the secrecy which had attended their entrance into this strange section when Jim suddenly started.

"Dere he is! look dere!"

"Where?"

He pointed a little to the right of the lake; but, as Inwood followed the direction of his finger, he saw nothing, and so he said.

"He just now dropped down—right dere—let's foller him up," exclaimed the negro, dashing straight at the spot, while Inwood speedily followed him, hardly certain whether he was acting prudently or not in doing so.

All the time they kept their eyes fixed upon the point, and the nature of the ground being such that the stranger could not escape without being seen, they were confident of either catching or identifying him. Jim made good progress, despite his ungainly manner of traveling, and, in a few moments, he came upon the place, which consisted of a small rock raised about a foot above the surface. Dashing forward, he made a spring over it, his immense feet coming down simultaneously and tremendously.

"Dere, I go tyou! hold still, now, for you is fast!"

But he wasn't, no one was there.

CHAPTER IX.

EXPLORING A MYSTERY.

INWOOD laughed at the look of his sable friend, as he gazed about him, as if he did not understand the meaning of all this.

"Where is your man?" he asked.

"Gracious! I don't know; wonder if I didn't mash him down into de ground," he said, stepping to one side and reviewing the huge footprints which he had made in the sod. "He ain't dere! wonder where he went?"

"I suspect he hasn't been there at all. You must have been mistaken, Jim. Are there any other footprints?"

After strict search they failed to find any, and Inwood was satisfied of Jim's mistake, although the latter was loth to admit it.

"Now," said Inwood, "I am going to find out all I can about matters and things. If you choose you can go home, or you can remain here."

"If it's all de same to you, I t'inks I'll retire," said Jim, displaying considerable eagerness to get out of the immediate neighborhood. Inwood watched him until he disappeared from view as he went crouching among the rocks and hills back to his hiding-place.

It was now near nightfall, and our young friend deemed it best to make himself invisible until he could reconnoiter with safety in the darkness. In this wild, rocky country, it was easy to find a secure hiding-place, and this he did, first satisfying himself that he was not watched in his maneuvers.

Night finally descended upon mountain and lake, and when it was fully dark, Inwood crept cautiously forth, and approached the edge of the water. The moon did not rise until late, and he was sure that if any sentinel was on guard, he had not detected his approach. He had come upon the lake at a point several hundred yards removed from the point where the canyon debouched into it, and he sat down for a few moments to meditate upon the best thing to do.

As he sat and listened, he was sure he heard a faint rippling out upon the lake near the point where he could just make out the dark outlines of the island looming up in the distance; but the gloom prevented his discovering anything more. Behind and around him was darkness, and in that solemn moment, George Inwood, naturally devout and thoughtful, lifted up his heart to the great Being above the stars, and sat for a time in blissful communion, such as the men of the world can never know.

He felt that this was a strange undertaking upon which he was about to venture, and, with the simplicity of a child, he asked that he might do that only which was right, and that he and those with him might be protected to the end.

He concluded after fully deliberating upon the matter, to remove his clothing and swim out to the island. By this means he could examine it silently and thoroughly, and with more safety than if he remained on shore waiting for a suitable opportunity.

His clothing was rolled into a bundle, and placed in a niche among the rocks, after which he took his bearings to make sure of no diffi-

culty in recovering them. This done, he waded carefully out, immediately rushing above his head into the chilly waters. The first shock over, the lake felt cool and pleasant, and he struck out slowly and easily toward the island.

As he neared the place which had created such wonder, he slowed his strokes, until he barely moved through the water, while he kept his eyes and ears open. Nothing suspicious rewarded his vigilance, and he was on the point of advancing more rapidly, when he detected the outlines of a man standing on the very edge of the island nearest him.

Inwood was so close that at first he was sure he had been discovered, but, as the stranger gave no evidence of suspecting anything, he slowly backed water, and gradually worked his way round to the opposite side. Here he dallied awhile, until seeing nothing alarming, he began making his way in.

But again, at this very juncture, he caught the glimmer of a light, heard the suppressed murmur of a voice, followed by a gentle plashing. The next moment he made the startling discovery that, while he was not approaching the island, it was approaching him. An indescribable thrill ran through him, and he understood the feeling which Jim had expressed; but his own sense forbade any faltering, and he concluded to wait for the "mountain to come to Mahomet."

A moment later he touched the edge of the island, and then learned that instead of earth, his hands were resting against logs, and that they extended several feet below the surface.

"I have learned one thing," was the reflection of Inwood; "this Enchanted Island rests upon logs, and isn't much more than a skillfully covered raft."

But the question still remained, as to what it all meant. What earthly reason could there be for a floating island in the midst of a lonely lake? There was some object beyond all question, and he resolved, if possible, to ascertain it for himself.

As he floated along with the island he heard the grating of poles upon the bottom of the lake, and it was therefore easy to comprehend the means of locomotion. Shortly after he detected shadowy forms passing to and fro, as they busied themselves in shoving the craft along. The phantom-like appearance of things was increased by the silence with which these men worked. As yet he had not heard a whisper exchanged between them.

Inwood right speedily appreciated the delicately dangerous position in which he was placed. One of the raftmen, as he drove the pole down into the water, just missed driving it into his crown, but he was an excellent swimmer, and he relied upon his skill in the perilous feature which this adventure was putting on.

"The old thing moves rather heavy!" finally remarked one of the men, in a gruff voice.

"Yes," was the response, "it acts as if the logs were becoming water-soaked. I've noticed for the last day or two that it seems to have sunk a few inches."

"I s'pose maybe it's carrying a pretty good load."

This remark seemed to contain some hidden

meaning which pleased the fancy of the others, for they all indulged in a quiet laugh.

These words, as a matter of course, were overheard by Inwood, who was puzzled more and more to understand their meaning; but the men did not seem to take up a train of remarks calculated to enlighten him. They plied the unwieldy craft for a few moments longer in silence, and then, as one paused to rest a moment, he spoke in this manner to him who was standing nearest:

"Too bad that a parcel should come down on us at this time."

"Yes; and I'm afraid they're going to stay."

"We gave the darky a good enough fright to keep him away, but that man doesn't look as if he could be frightened by any such thing."

"There's a youngster, too, I noticed to-day, when I fired at them."

"Very likely they'll get far enough away not to trouble us any more. It looked to me as though the darky had brought them back to take a look at the lake and island, seeing which, they were satisfied and went back."

"I hope so, for it's too bad—"

At this juncture the man thrust his pole into the water, and applied his strength to it, as a consequence of which, his words came so mutilated through his closed teeth as to be unintelligible to the intensely interested person on the other side.

All at once, Inwood felt his feet touch the bottom, and, turning his head, saw that they were within a hundred yards of the shore. Whether they intended anchoring a short distance from the land, or to lie against it, was unknown to him, though he surmised the latter, as the depth remained the same, and they still used their poles with the same resolve as at first.

If Inwood was right in his conjectures on this point, he saw that he must evacuate his position to escape being jammed between it and the rock.

Moving carefully along the edge of the raft, he made his way around the end, when he became aware of another fact which could not fail to give him uneasiness. The moon was rising, and as soon as it came above the wood or mountain, could scarcely fail to reveal him; but, as a few moments later they would be along the shore, he conjectured that if the worst came to worst, he could dart into the wood and take his chances of escape.

Shortly after, the Enchanted Island lightly touched the shore, and immediately, to the delight of Inwood, the three men whom he had noticed sprung off and disappeared with rather a remarkable abruptness—so singular indeed that he believed they intended to return, and he therefore maintained his position until this point was settled.

Fifteen or twenty minutes passed away, and bringing no sight nor sound of them, he hesitated a moment and then concluded to clamber upon the island and satisfy himself, so far as possible, regarding it. Still a vague sense of danger restrained him. It did not seem improbable that a sentinel was stationed upon this curious piece of workmanship, although if such were the case, he took particular good care to keep quiet and unobserved.

To satisfy himself, Inwood, with his hands drew himself twice entirely around the island. This gave him an accurate idea of its size, and showed him that its base was wood. He saw nothing suspicious, although a dozen men could have been effectually concealed in the dense shrubbery.

Suddenly a whim took possession of him to dive beneath it, and examine its construction as he passed along. This plan offered the least danger, and the breadth of the island was such that he could do it with little or no difficulty.

Sinking softly downward until he reached the lowest point, he struck rapidly out, and had taken but one stroke beneath the surface, when he came abruptly upward, and as he threw his hands above, felt nothing but the water. The next moment, to his unbounded surprise, he found that he was in the center of the island, which inclosed him on every side. In fact, it was a floating circle, the middle portion being open and full of water.

George felt around until he placed his hand upon a support, when he came to the conclusion that he had advanced another step in the solution of this mystery, but the step had taken him into as blank darkness as had the first move he made.

Here was proof that the Enchanted Island, as he had named it from his first impression, was the careful work of human hands, although why it should ever have been made was totally unexplainable. In the midst of his meditation on this point, he was not a little startled to observe, by the increasing light of the moon, the figure of a man, undoubtedly a sentinel, who, by the nodding of his head, was either half or wholly asleep.

Which was a very fortunate thing for Mr. Inwood, otherwise he could not have failed of discovering himself to him. Sheltered by the shade of the shrubbery, he made as hasty examination as possible of the contour of this interior basin, but could discover nothing more than that it was oblong in shape, and quite even around its edges.

It was while engaged in this survey that the man arose and looked down into the water, as if he saw something suspicious.

"There's *something* there!" he muttered in an audible voice, "and I've heard it more than once. It's a queer fish I think."

The queer fish, at this juncture, deemed it prudent to sink down and retreat to the outer surface of the lake, which place he reached just in time to see his man standing along shore with a huge pole, as if watching for him to rise. Fortunately, he was so close to the shore as to be in shadow, and feeling his way along he speedily reached land, where he waited until his friend's attention was called in another direction, when he crawled out, somewhat weakened by his long habitation in the water.

But the object of his reconnaissance, so far as possible, was obtained, and he set out on his return. He experienced some difficulty in recovering his clothing, but succeeded at last and started rapidly homeward. He was not a little alarmed upon reaching the place to find that neither Jim nor Edwin was there.

CHAPTER X.

A HUNT, AND HOW IT ENDED.

YOUNG Edwin Inwood had been so long deprived of his hunt, that he determined to improve his time to the utmost. He took a direction exactly opposite to the one pursued by his brother, and soon found himself in the midst of the wood which contained their new home, where it was open and easily traveled.

It was his wish to secure an antelope, which were quite abundant in this section, although almost entirely unknown a little further south, and he walked very carefully, well aware of the acuteness of their hearing. A quarter of a mile or so brought him to a broad, wild ravine, and, looking down this, the first object that met his eye was a group of Mohave Indians seated around a camp-fire. Three sat smoking, and two were engaged in dressing a fine plump antelope, and preparing it for their supper.

They were fully a hundred feet below where the boy stood, and several hundred yards distant. He watched them for some time with interest. Each had around his person or near him, one of those brilliant and wonderfully woven blankets, which have made the Indians of the distant Southwest known all over the country. They were painted and daubed up like a lot of children's toys, their coarse black hair hanging loosely over their shoulders, while its usual stiffness was intensified by the rainbow-hued stuff smeared among it. It makes a fellow look hideously comical to see his face of all colors, and there was something in the outlandish look of these Mohaves which would have brought a grim smile to the countenance of him who had scarcely ever laughed.

They never once raised their heads, although Edwin scrutinized them so closely that he was sure they were a portion of the party which had attacked them at the cave, and he recognized the very individual who was so handsomely vanquished in his attempt to shake hands with Jim Tubbs. This being the case, he entertained much less fear of them than he would had they been strangers.

But, recollecting that he had come out for the purpose of obtaining food, he turned away and wandered off in another direction. While he was asking himself whether it would be prudent to fire his gun in their vicinity or not, a fine, plump young antelope rushed by him with the speed of the wind. Quick as thought his gun was over his shoulder, and, with a frenzied leap, the beautiful creature dropped, and, after a few frantic struggles, lay dead.

Edwin hurried up to him, and drawing his knife, commenced dressing it and securing the choicest portions for their supper. Absorbed thus in his work, he forgot entirely the proximity of the aborigines. He had about completed his work, when, with lightning-like suddenness, a reflection of his peril came over him, and he arose erect and glanced about him.

Providentially his first look was directed toward the proper point, and he saw at quite a distance two Indians, standing perfectly motionless, and watching him seemingly with great interest. The moment he raised his head, they darted each behind a tree, evidently not through fear, but with a far different object,

Edwin was a boy with an intelligence and perception beyond his years, and he immediately saw his danger, and looked furtively around to learn the best direction in which to retreat. His first thought was to run straight from the red-men, and, observing that the wood was thicker and more broken, he did not hesitate, but started off at once.

Casting one glance over his shoulder, he observed the two aborigines after him, although neither of them gave utterance to the "yell" which, with the proverbial "*ugh*," seems to be about the only language which ever emerges from the lips of the North American Indian, if the authority of story-writers is to be taken.

In a race of this kind, we could not dare risk our reputation in saying that the little fellow was anything like a match for his lithe pursuers. He hadn't been in training as long as they, and it was impossible that the cowardly Mohaves should not gain upon him with sad certainty.

All of which he expected, and he therefore turned all his energies toward finding some place in which he could conceal himself. Bounding over and among the rough and rugged rocks, he turned at right angles to the course he had been following, darted a few rods ahead, and then, to his dismay, found himself on the banks of a small, rapid stream.

But there was no time for hesitation. He ran along the shore a little way, and then rapidly climbed a small tree, dragging his rifle as best he could after him. Here he crouched among the branches, and, panting and trembling, awaited the result.

As yet he had not heard a sound, but he did not dare hope that his pursuers were off the scent. He had read certain wonderful tales of the miraculous prowess of the "red-men of the woods," and had every reason to believe that they were perfect bloodhounds in such matters.

Nor was he mistaken; for he had not been in his elevated position five minutes when, through the interstices of the leaves, he saw one of them walking along the edge of the stream, carefully examining the ground, occasionally pausing and looking about him, and now and then making a curious, gyrating motion, with his hand over his head, which the boy did not understand, but which we suspect was a signal for his companion.

It would have been the easiest thing in the world for Edwin Inwood to load his gun and shoot the Mohave who was stealing so cautiously upon him; but he hesitated. It is no light thing to take a human life, even if it belongs to an Indian, and he did not wish to commit such a deed, unless his own self-preservation demanded it. Whether it did or not was the question which the boy considered, and upon which he was hardly able to decide.

Suppose he did slay the red-man, his companion remained, against whom he could do nothing, and who would be sure to visit a cruel punishment upon him. No; he decided that the time had not yet come for him to do such a thing.

In the mean time, the Mohave was close at hand. Not once did he raise his head, but walked slowly along, examining the ground, and looking across the stream as though he ex-

pected to see the fugitive. The heart of the latter gave a throb as he saw him pass beyond the tree which contained himself; but the temporary hope thus awakened was speedily dispelled by observing the red-man suddenly halt, look around him as though he failed, for the moment, exactly to comprehend things, and then he raised his head and saw the youngster cowering among the branches.

The Mohave surveyed him quietly a moment, and then motioned for him to descend. The boy could not refuse, as he was entirely in his power, and he obeyed without delay. The captor looked into his face with a curious expression, but still uttered no exclamation or word. Finally, he took him by the arm, led him a short distance down the stream of the brook, and then motioned for him to fall behind and follow.

On the whole, this struck Edwin as rather a curious proceeding. The Mohave had not deprived him of his gun, and did not even take the trouble to examine whether it was loaded or not, nor did he once look over his shoulder to see whether he was followed by the captive. It was a strong temptation to the latter to dart aside and make another effort to get away, but he could hardly bring his mind to the "striking point."

As a matter of course, Edwin had strong hope of getting out of this difficulty, and he therefore paid strict attention to the route which they followed, so as not to be lost, when the opportunity should come to him. The Mohave literally took the "back track," going over his own footsteps, and turning off from the stream at precisely the point where the boy first struck it.

As yet there was nothing seen of the other Indian, and the boy was wondering where he could have taken himself, when he made his appearance as suddenly as if he had risen from the very ground. He seemed to entertain the same constitutional objection to talking as did his predecessor, for not a word was exchanged between them. One walked in the front and the other in the rear of the boy, so that, for the present, he gave over all thoughts of taking abrupt leave of them.

The party passed directly by the remains of the antelope slain by Edwin, and so on until they reached the gorge where he had first descried the Mohaves as they were seated around the camp-fire. This led the boy to think that they were a part of those who had besieged them in the cave.

Whether this was a matter for congratulation or fear was more than he could determine, although it gave him hope that the captured Mohave might be among them, who he was sure would not forget the magnanimity shown him when he was at the mercy of those whom he sought to injure.

Nightfall was close at hand, and the party made their preparations for remaining on the old camping-ground of their former friends. They had a portion of the antelope with them, and offered a piece to Edwin, who accepted it more for the sake of pleasing them, than on account of any hunger he felt. After this they seated themselves upon the ground, and mo-

tioned for him to do the same. Their pipes were then produced, and then began the longest and dreariest evening of Edwin Inwood's life.

He lay on the ground, looking up at the stars, communing with the Great Being who dwelt beyond them, wondering what George and Jim thought of his prolonged absence, and speculating as to what the morrow would bring forth. Hour after hour wore away, and it was near midnight, when his ear detected a faint, regular jarring of the ground, and, raising his head, he saw through the gloom a party of men close at hand.

CHAPTER XI.

A KINDNESS REQUIRED.

"I DOESN'T care 'tic'larly 'bout gittin' 'quaint-ed wid any *spooks*," muttered Jim Tubbs, after bidding good-by to George Inwood, as the latter started on his reconnoissance of the Enchanted Island.

"Dat 'ere George was always a fearsome boy eber since he was a little codger dat used to ride de hosses at home in ole New York—nebber could make him b'lebe any stories about ghosts, an' hobblegoblins, an' *spooks*. Beats all natur' how queer some folks be; I don't care much for darkies, whedder dey be red or black, while he does; but when *spooks* is around, I 'fers to be 'scused, while he don't.

Thus did the African commune with himself, as he made his way carefully from the lake and its phantom-like island. Not until he was far from it did he pause, look around, and ask himself what was the best thing for him to do.

"I has de 'pinion dat when I 'grated to dese parts, I come arter *gold*, an' dat's what I'm going to hunt for at present. I sometimes t'inks I orter be de 'prietor ob dis 'stablishment, as I 'wested de most money. Howsumeber, Mr. Tubbs, we'll 'scuse de 'scussion ob dat question to some subsequent 'casion."

Without suspecting it, the African took almost the same direction as that followed by Edwin Inwood. As he was looking for gold, he went along the margin of a small stream, and began examining its banks and current for some signs of auriferous deposit.

"Dey say you're de most aptest to find gold near de water, 'less you find it somewhere else—so I'll take a peep. Oh!—"

Jim stopped, absolutely thunderstruck, for there in the water before him he saw a large piece of yellow metal, whose nature he divined at a glance. Plunging forward the next instant, he seized it in his hand, and held it up and turned it over. It was a piece of pure gold, nearly the size of a hen's egg. It lay imbedded in the sand, only a small portion displaying itself.

The dusky fellow could scarcely restrain his delight. He turned it over and over again, and danced about, and laughed, and almost cried. Finally he sobered down.

"Dat's de best fish I eber caughted, an' I've fished a good deal. Shouldn't wonder if dere's some more ob 'em 'bout."

There was some reason, if not much truth, in this conclusion, and he fell to work with might and main. The stream was about a dozen feet in breadth, some eighteen or twenty inches in

depth, with a clear current, and a hard, sandy bottom. As he had not his tools with him, he laid his rifle on the bank, and procured a heavy stick with which he raked the sand hither and thither in his search.

A few minutes' search revealed another piece considerably smaller than the first, but large enough to fill Jim's heart with joy.

"Talk about *spooks*!" he exclaimed, contemptuously, "dat 'ere lump ob yaller stuff is more interesting dan all de *spooks* on de lake or in de wood. I t'inks I'll settle here for de present."

He plied his rude rake with unabated vigor, but nothing more rewarded his labor. He gradually worked his way up the channel, so intent on his labor as not to observe or care for aught that took place around him.

This persevering toil undoubtedly would have continued until darkness, had it not been checked in a most sudden and alarming manner. Jim's head was bent down, when a peculiar, whirring noise caught his ear, and he looked up just in time to see a dark, circling ring descending over him, and, ere he could dodge, the loop of the lasso dropped to his elbows, and was drawn taut with the quickness of lightning.

The huge fellow comprehended his predicament in an instant, and exerted his giant strength to the utmost to free himself.

"Dat 'ere will nebber do! My gracious, dey'll got all my gold!"

So great was his strength, that, in all probability, he would have broken the rope which inclosed his arms; but, in the midst of his furious struggles, a second lasso, from nearly an opposite point, shot up in the air, and, in spite of the attempt he made to dodge it, came down with unerring certainty, and helped imprison his arms.

"Dat 'ere is a little too lubbin'," muttered Jim toiling like a giant in his bonds, but, finding himself unable to accomplish anything in this manner, he resorted to different tactics.

"I can *pull*, if I can't break."

With which, he made a furious plunge up the bank, thereby entailing a rather ludicrous occurrence. The Mohave who had hurled the second lasso, simply held it in his hand, he and his companion instantly dropped out of sight the moment they threw their ropes. The sudden and tremendous strain upon the rope found him totally unprepared, and he came scrambling headlong out of the bushes and over the bank before he could recover himself, observing which, Jim made a dash at him; but, as the first red-man had secured his around the point of a projecting rock, the doughty fellow was brought up with a round turn, and the other made all haste to rectify the mistake which he had committed.

"Lucky for you I couldn't cotch you! If I'd got one ob dem feet ob mine on you, I'd have mashed you."

At this juncture the red-men revealed themselves, three of them rising to their feet, and all motioning to their captive to come ashore. This command he obeyed, all the time puzzling his wits to see whether there was not some means by which he could extricate himself. The third Indian placed his loop over his arms,

and they then mounted their horses, fastening the ropes to the saddle, and taking good care to keep their sable prey at a respectable distance.

Poor Jim Tubbs was now fairly secured. The three ropes which incased him like a child, were woven of a peculiar thread, which made their tenacity almost equal to that of strands of iron. The Mohaves were perfect adepts at this kind of business, and, coming upon the African unawares, they had effected his capture with rare skill.

"Dey've got me dis time, sure," he reflected, as he walked along between their horses, "an' de 'portant question is, what am dey gwine to do wid me, an' when dey gwine to do it, an' how dey gwine to do it, an' how it's gwine to 'gree wid me when dey come to do it."

He walked along a short distance in silence, but his thoughts were busy.

"I remember dat dat gentleman in New York dat put up at my boarding-house, said the Ingins sometimes roasted de prisoners what dey took. Gracious! I hope dey don't s'pose to do dat wid me."

He scanned the face of each one for a few moments, and concluded:

"Dey don't look very awful in de face; don't b'leeve dey'll roast me. Oh! jus' hear dem gold pieces chink in my pocket. Wonder if I can't bribe 'em wid one ob 'em to let me off. But den dey don't know what gold am worth; dey'd jus' as lieb hab my jack-knife, an' I'd jus' as lieb hab it too; so I t'inks I'll let it stay in my pocket fur de present. Mighty glad dey didn't t'ink 'bout my ole gun in de grass, for I can go back an' get it myself arter awhile."

That "after awhile" was the "to-morrow" of the unrepentant—a period, about which one might reasonably entertain a few grains of doubt. Jim was philosopher enough, seeing that there was no help under the circumstances, to take things as a matter of course. He walked along quietly and peacefully, the Mohaves being sharp enough to keep an unremitting watch upon his every movement.

Just as night was setting in, they halted near a pile of rocks, where one of their number collected sticks, and speedily started a fire. In this portion of California during the summer season, it is generally very warm and oppressive, but the last few days had been remarkably cool, and a fire was by no means unwelcome. The cramped position of his limbs made him chilly, and he came as near to the blaze as they would permit. No food was prepared nor did the fellow care for any.

An hour or two after dark, and while the Mohaves were pulling at their pipes, and Jim was half asleep on the ground, he heard a footstep, and raising his head, saw near him the identical Indian with whom he had shaken hands so emphatically. The African's complexion was such as to make him easily recognizable, and the start and glance of the red-man told plainly that there was no misunderstanding upon his part.

"How do you do?" inquired Jim, with a nod of his head. "If you'll untie my arms, I'll shake hands with you again."

The Indian seemed pleased in his way at meeting the man who had vanquished him so

nicely. He offered no rudeness to the captive, but came nearer, and seating himself upon the ground, smoked his pipe.

This was extremely gratifying to the sable individual, for it was proof positive that the Mohave had not forgotten the kindness which he had received, and that he was well disposed toward the unfortunate African.

"How lucky that he doesn't know I wanted to come de gold trick ober him—don't b'lebe he'd t'ink so much ob me. T'ank you, I guess I'll smoke."

He inclined his head forward, and the pipe-stem was inserted between his teeth, and he puffed at him in a style which showed that there was no pretended enjoyment on his part.

"Dat 'ere tastes good, I can tell you," he said, with an expression on his shiny face of genuine pleasure. "I's much obliged to you, an' you needn't be 'fraid ob 'fending me if you want to offer it to-morrer ag'in."

The Mohave knowing nothing at all of English, and Jim Tubbs understanding not the first syllable of Mohave, it is not to be supposed that they got along very well in conversation. Jim tried increasing the loudness of his voice, but that did not seem to help matters, and their communication therefore took the character of signs, the African's words being thrown in by way of embellishment.

After he had smoked awhile, he turned his back so that the Mohave might see how his arms were bound, and then said:

"Jus' cut dem, won't you? I'll be much obliged."

The Indian unquestionably understood the request, but he was not satisfied as to the propriety of granting it. He looked at his companions, exchanged a few words, when they came up and debated the matter.

"I won't run away—I'll promise you dat—feller treats me kind, I'll do de same wid him—gib you my word ob honor."

They seemed disposed to grant his desire, but before doing so, began a search to assure themselves that he had not any weapons of offense about him. Jim sat motionless, except when he assisted them as much as possible, never once thinking of the gold until he heard the two pieces jingle together in his pocket. Instantly he started up in terror.

"I hain't got noffin' dere—dat am sart'in—no use ob feelin' dat pocket."

But a coppery hand was already inserted, and the next moment it drew out the two yellow pieces.

"Dem ain't mine," added Jim, and then, unwilling to tell an untruth, he added, "dey ain't sart'in—'cause I've got to divide wid de rest."

They were passed back and forth, the Indians seeming to care very little about them. When they reached the hands of the hand-shaking Mohave, he turned them over several times, and then replaced them in the pocket of the rightful owner.

"Gracious! but you're a good feller," exclaimed Jim; "if it wa'n't for de boys, I b'lebe I'd settle down among you, an' take you for my bruvver chief; if you'll only let my arms loose you needn't be afeerd dat I'll swing 'em around careless."

The obliging Mohaves, at this point removed the lassoes from his limbs and left his body entirely unrestrained—a proceeding like the former, the result of the magnanimity showed the Indian, when he expected no mercy.

"I 'gin to t'ink George is right," mused Jim; "he always told me to be kind to ebery one, no matter if he was your enemy. If I had come de gold trick ober dis feller, he wouldn't have been half so cleber. Gracious! he wouldn't have been, at all."

The prisoner was now almost entirely at ease, and had given over all fear of his own personal safety. He argued that they would not be so lenient and considerate if they intended any ultimate harm, and he endeavored to content himself as well as he could until the morrow, which he hoped would see him set at liberty.

As the night wore on, none of the party seemed to be sensible of its somniferous tendency. The Mohaves remained wide awake, and Jim had had too many things in his mind to feel drowsy. The former kept consulting together, and finally, when it was quite late, they all arose, and with the prisoner between them, started off.

A half-hour later, they came upon the party which held Edwin Inwood.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GOLDEN RULE.

It was a painful surprise both to Edwin Inwood and Jim Tubbs when they met each other in captivity. They conversed together, and acquainted themselves with their mutual history, after their separation during the day.

"Poor George will be anxious enough about us," said the boy. "I feel worse on his account than I do on my own."

"What's de matter wid him?" asked the negro, not exactly comprehending the force of this remark.

"Nothing, so far as I know; but what will he think when he comes back and finds nothing of us?"

"T'ink we ain't dere, I s'pose."

"I don't believe these people intend us any harm. They have treated us both so kindly that they will let us go to-morrow."

"Hope so."

"I see among those who came with you, the same one that we had in the cave the other day."

"Yes; me an' him are great friends," replied Jim, with an important air. "I kindert'ink he always had a notion of me."

They chatted together until toward morning, when, becoming sleepy, both lay down upon the ground, and slept until daylight. The African race is proverbial for its drowsy proclivities, and it required some hard shaking upon the part of Edwin before he could arouse his companion. But once awake, he was thoroughly so, and he arose to his feet.

The Mohaves had the camp-fire burning, and a number of birds, which resembled quails, cooking, while they had collected quite a quantity of mesquite beans, very numerous more south in California, and occasionally encountered further north. These furnished an abundant and nourishing breakfast, much needed by our friends.

Daylight brought another surprise, in the shape of a third prisoner—a large, stalwart-looking man, dressed in the garb of an Indian—in fact, no other personage than he who had guarded the lake and the Enchanted Island so zealously. He was sullen and obstinate, and his hands had been tied behind him for the purpose of security. He scowled at his fellow-prisoners as he was brought up, and undoubtedly hated them as thoroughly as he did his captors.

On the other hand, the Mohaves were particularly vindictive toward the man, and from his appearance had been subjecting him to suffering and torture for their own amusement. Only two held him, and they must certainly have secured him by strategy as he was almost as muscular as Jim, and would have been an ugly customer in a hand-to-hand struggle.

"They've got quite a lot of us," he remarked addressing Inwood.

"Yas; dar am t'ree of us."

The stranger paid no heed to the negro, but spoke directly to Inwood.

"I s'pose you know what tribe these belong to?" he continued.

Edwin made answer that he did not.

"They are Mohaves—a villainous set of dogs. I consider 'em as bad as the Apaches, and you know they are as ugly as ugly can be."

"They have treated us kindly."

"Yes," replied the stranger, with a contemptuous expression, "you will find out. You remember the Oatman family that were massacred, except a boy and two girls, in '49, in crossing the plains?"

"Yes; I saw the son in New York, and one of the sisters, with her chin all tattooed with India ink, which they say the Indians did when they had her with them."

"Do you know what tribe murdered them?"

"I heard, but I have forgotten."

"It was these same Mohaves, and there ain't a more villainous set of dogs this side of the Mississippi. You may make up your mind, as I have, that you'll never see that sun go down again."

This was uttered coolly, but with such an air of conviction as to its truth, as to send a chill to the hearts of the hearers.

"Bress de Lord! you don't mean dat?" asked Jim, fairly quaking with terror. The stranger turned toward him and said:

"There's no chance for *you*, for I never seen an Indian that didn't hate a nigger, and I'm with 'em there myself. If I could say the word, I wouldn't get *you* out of this scrape, for you've no business in these parts."

"Bress your heart! nobody has axed you to say a word; I'd rather hab de ill-will ob such a miserable lookin' ducky as you dan your lub, an' if you doesn't like it, all I've got to say is, dat I'm at your sarvice, an' you can help yourself."

The stranger glared at Jim like a wild beast, but as his own hands were tied, and those of the African's were not, he was unable to help himself.

"Oh, you needn't look so lubbin' at me!" said Jim, "I ain't afeerd ob you; I'll try an' coax

'em to ontie your hands, an' den we'll hug each other, if you want to."

The stranger's feelings were inexpressible, and in his supreme contempt, he turned his back upon the negro, and addressed himself directly to Edwin.

"My name is Gaylor, and I've been out in these parts about a year with a lot of others. We've had to dodge and fight the Indian all the time, and they know me well enough I reckon. and there ain't any great amount of love atween us. I've played some purty smart tricks upon 'em, but they got ahead of me at last. I was so tired last night that I lay down to sleep, and when I woke up, a couple of 'em had me fast, sure, and—well, you see I'm here with you."

Inwood gave the particulars of their own misfortune, and then inquired:

"What have you been doing here?"

Gaylor hesitated a moment, showed some confusion, but quickly rallying himself, replied:

"The same as yourself, I suppose; we have been looking for gold."

"You must have found something, or you would not have remained so long."

"Well, yes, we have had tolerable luck—putty good I may say toward the last—but what good is it going to do me?"

"Not much, I am afraid, nor us either; but you had a number of friends with you: will they not attempt your rescue?"

Gaylor shook his head.

"No use of looking there; they'll be sure I've been rubbed out, and won't take the trouble to hunt me up."

"How many are there?"

"Three, besides myself. They think enough of me, too, and, if they thought there was a chance, they would be here in a jiffy; but what's the use? They even don't know that I've been run off with, but likely enough imagine that I have gone off on a hunt, and they won't look for me back under a week."

All three prisoners were seated on the ground close together, the Mohaves allowing them opportunity to converse without molestation, although several scowled at Gaylor, as if unwilling to grant this small boon.

"I see you are dressed as an Indian," remarked Edwin, in an inquiring voice to Gaylor, who smiled for a moment, and did not reply. Finally he looked down at his leggings and stained skin, as if their appearance were a new thing to him.

"Well, I don't see as there is any harm in telling you. This is the style of dress we have all adopted. You see, we've got particular reasons for not wishing any white men to know we are here, and it was my plan to get ourselves up in this rig, so that if anybody should see us, they would think they was looking at Mohave Indians."

Edwin forbore to ask the reason for all this, for it was impertinent, but he concluded that Gaylor and his three companions were criminals fleeing from justice.

"I shouldn't t'ink such a rapsallion as you would want folks to know dat you was white—don't blame you fur paintin' ob yourself," remarked Jim Tubbs, who was an attentive listener to the conversation,

"See here," said Gaylor, fairly white with passion, "I've had enough of you! I'd like to—I'd like to see these dogs burn you. *I hate you!*"

"All right," replied Jim, and was about uttering some more badinage, when Edwin requested him to keep still.

Before the conversation could be resumed, the Mohave who was brought so prominently into notice at the beginning of our narrative, walked up to Jim and Edwin and motioned to them to stand up. They did so, the boy still holding his gun. He then led them about a rod away, halted, pointed to the northward, placed his left hand on the back of Edwin, and gave him a gentle shove, and then did the same with Jim.

"Golly, dat means *trabbel*, an' here's de gemman what's goin' to frow himself out all kinder loose like!" exclaimed the delighted African, as he straightway began what may be termed "tall walking."

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, abruptly halting after a few steps. "I forgot to t'ank you. Much obliged. Good-by."

Edwin expressed his thanks as well as he could by pantomime and hurried after his sable friend.

The Golden Rule! Golden, indeed, and the true measure by which to mark our steps to Heaven. Here were two lives saved by the one "little deed of kindness."

They walked rapidly some distance, and then Edwin placed his hand upon the colossal shoulder of the negro.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Jim, looking down in his pale face.

"I'm afraid they're going to kill Gaylor."

"I hope so—"

"Oh, Jim, don't talk that way."

"I dunno as I hope so, but I don't care; he's an ugly darky, an' orter have de gold trick come ober him."

"I don't feel right in going off and leaving him this way, *and it isn't right.*"

"Well, what you goin' to do?" asked the African, betraying some uneasiness.

"We must go back, and try and get them to let him off."

"Dey won't do dat."

"How do you know they won't?"

"I don't t'ink so."

"We can try."

"I'll wait here while you go."

The boy ran back, and in a few moments reached the camp. Gaylor was standing with his back toward him, and did not notice his approach. The Mohaves were all standing near him, and in their looks was great evil. They all turned inquiringly toward Edwin, who walked rapidly up to the prisoner, then dropped on his knees, made a supplicating motion, and then, placing his arms within his, started off. A half-dozen Indians sprung forward to prevent it. He dropped on his knees again, and with tears in his eyes besought his release. He could not be misunderstood, but his answer was scowls, and one who was quite angry drew his knife; but before he could do harm, our first acquaintance sprung forward, and leading him quite forcibly a few steps, pointed earnestly in the direction whence he came,

"You understand that?" said Gaylor, speaking for the first time. "It's no use; I'm much obliged to you for your good-will, but these dogs don't like me, and you're only fooling away your time to bother with 'em."

Edwin's heart was overflowing, and, unable to speak, he broke into a rapid run, and speedily reached the spot where the trembling Jim was awaiting him.

"I couldn't do anything, Jim," he faltered.

"Sorry—'cause dey'll be kind ob heavy on him."

"Jim, you must go try them."

"Oh, I can't!—I can't!"

"But you must."

"What's de use?"

"That Indian that was in the cave thinks a great deal of you. Go and plead with him."

"But dat 'ere Gaylor said he hated me."

"What if he did? If you can save his life, don't you wish to do it?"

Jim was greatly agitated, and rubbed a tear from his eye.

"You're right, Ned; dar's sumfin' in me dat tells me I ought to do it, an' by de help ob God *I will*."

"Be quick, then, for there is no time to lose."

The negro needed no urging, for he was prompted by the most powerful of motives—Conscience, the "still, small voice," which, if listened to, guides us all aright.

When he reached the camp matters were about the same as Inwood had left them.

"Mr. Gaylor," said Jim, speaking abruptly, "I've come to see if I can save you."

The man turned around and looked at him silently for a moment, as if unable to comprehend what he meant. Then he slowly shook his head from side to side.

"No use; you'd better go back."

"I'm goin' to coax these fellers, an' if dey won't do it, we'll pitch in an' fight."

The Mohaves stood in a sort of irregular circle, their expression forbidding enough. Jim walked straight up to his first acquaintance, and leading him to where Gaylor stood, pointed at him, and motioned toward Inwood, whose great anxiety had brought him within sight and hearing. The Indian shook his head and looked around at his companions in a manner that showed *he* had no particular objection, if they would give their consent.

Jim repeated his request, and he again swayed his head, but he was solicited more vehemently than before, whereupon the savage withdrew, and began an earnest conference with his friends. The consultation was long, earnest and stormy—but the end was victory. The Indian was a man of authority. Gaylor was loosed from his bonds, and he and Jim walked away side by side, and rejoining Edwin Inwood, all three took their departure.

"We do not make our thoughts, they grow in us,
Like grain in wood; the growth is of the skies,
Which are of nature; nature is of God.
The world is full of glorious likenesses."

CHAPTER XIII.

A FORTUNE SECURED.

THE three walked silently forward for a considerable distance, when Gaylor paused, and,

stepping in front, so as to face the two, he spoke as a man speaks when in earnest.

"See here, Jim and Ned, as I believe you call each other, I've got a few words to say to you. I'm a pretty bad man, but when one does me a kindness, I'm like an Indian, and don't forget it. I want to thank you, Ned, again, for what you tried to do. This here darky has been the means of saving my life, when I'd given up. I spoke mean to him awhile ago; I want to ask his pardon for that, and give him my thanks."

"Gorry! don't say nuffin' 'bout it," said Jim, drawing his huge hand across his eyes; "'tain't worth spoken 'bout. It's all right."

"I'm glad to hear it. When you hear me speak again as I did of a black man awhile ago, it will be when I hain't got any senses left. But see here, I've got something I'm going to do for you. You have another man with you, haven't you—one who is the leader?"

"Yes; my brother George."

"Take me to him."

"Hold on!" interrupted Jim, "I'd like to get dat gun ob mine. I know where I left it up among de grass 'long de creek where dey lassoed me."

"Lead on, then."

The three deviated from their course, and soon afterward reached the stream where Jim had found his gold, and the Mohaves had found him. A short search discovered his gun, and they started homeward. The distance was considerable, and it was fully an hour before they reached the wood, where George Inwood was overjoyed to see them.

A few minutes' talk made everything plain to him.

"You see, George Gaylor ain't the man to give a friend the go-by," said that personage himself. "And I'll prove to you what I say. I s'pose you're in these parts looking for *gold*?"

"That is what has drawn us hither," replied George, with a smile.

"Have you found much?"

"Not a great deal; we have had middling good fortune."

"I s'pose maybe now I hain't got nuffin'," said Jim, as he drew his two nuggets from his pocket, and displayed them to the wonder and gaze of his friends.

"You seem to be made of gold," said George. "You know how you put your hand in your pocket and brought it out when we bought our horses; but where did you obtain it?"

"Maybe I was digging it out ob de sand when de Ingins slung dere ropes ober my neck; maybe I didn't got it dere."

"Is there any more?"

"Don't t'ink dere is."

"Whether there is or not, don't matter," said Gaylor. "I'll show you more gold to-day than you ever seen before, and all that you will ever care about seeing."

All looked at him with a look which said they failed to take in his meaning.

"Just come with me—you will see it is no humbug."

And the whole party started toward the Enchanted Island, Gaylor himself leading the way.

At first sight, George Inwood recognized Gay-

lor as the man whom he had viewed through the telescope, and who had fired his gun at their friends. He did not deem it best, however, to refer to these circumstances, as he placed full faith in the honesty of the man's intentions.

Reaching the lake, he searched awhile along the shore for a canoe. He had great difficulty in finding it, but succeeded at last, and then, asking his friends to await his return, he paddled rapidly across the lake, and, landing on the shore, entered the thick wood. He was undoubtedly with his companions, and remained away a good while. While they were watching for his return, Jim exclaimed, in great excitement:

"See dar! look at de island! I's agwine to leabe when spooks comes about."

The island, which at first sight was lying along shore, could now be seen slowly approaching the center of the lake, and at the same moment, the form of Gaylor was distinguished, as he plied his pole. This seemed to convince Jim that there was nothing supernatural about it, and he consented to remain.

Reaching a point near the middle, the mass of shrubbery came to a standstill, and Gaylor then put off in his canoe.

"Jump in," said he, as it lightly touched the shingle, "it will hold you all. I'll show you something which you have never seen."

They stepped carefully into the small canoe, and it sunk to its gunwales with the unusual weight. But Gaylor managed it skillfully, and a few minutes later they all stepped upon the Enchanted Island.

"Now let me tell you a little story," said their friend. "Some months ago a party of five of us came down through these parts looking for gold. Reaching this lake we started across in a boat, and near the middle discovered several yellow nuggets lying on the bottom. I dove down and brought them up, and found them to be gold. We soon found there was any quantity lying around loose, and, of course we determined to get all we could. But while we had come upon a fortune, there were several bad things in the way of bringing it up. The country was full of Indians, and there were white men wandering over the country. If any of them should get news of our windfall, it would be all over with us. So after thinking over it, we hit upon a plan. We made a framework of logs, and then covered it over with green sod, pebbles and trees, so as to make it look just like an island. Then we sometimes kindled fires, so as to scare any one who saw it. This we floated right over the spot where we saw the gold, and began bringing it up. We had to dive for it after we had managed to loosen a portion with our poles. We had so much trouble in getting it, that one of our men started to San Francisco for tools to answer our purpose. But we never heard of him again, and we suppose the Mohaves got track of him. Howsumever, we worked away, and the amount of it is, we have all made an independent fortune, and there is enough left for you. We used to float this ashore a night, as we had a good hiding-place there. I have started my party north to San Francisco, and I expect to join them in half an hour. No one knows this secret but you. You

can work here as long as you please. You seem to have the good will of the Mohaves, but look out for white men. Be very careful to let no one see you at work. Now, if you will only take me ashore, I will leave you alone."

George Inwood paddled their friend to land, where they bid farewell to each other, and he returned to the Enchanted Island, and began work.

Gaylor had not deceived him. They saw large quantities of gold on the bottom of the lake. George observed that it lay directly in the path of the canyon, which had been referred to as emptying into the lake. This made it seem as if it had been washed down by the current, whose tremendous velocity was sufficient to hurl boulders of a ton's weight down its channel as if driven by a columbiad.

It is not often that a fortune can be picked up from the bottom of a lake, and, even when the inviting auriferous nuggets and the glittering sand lay before their eyes, it was found no easy task to bring it up to the surface. But what will man not do for gold? A bountiful harvest awaited them, and they toiled and labored as they never had done before.

Jim was the great machine for procuring the precious yellow particles. Neither George nor Edwin could remain under water long enough to secure much; but the African took to it as if he was amphibious, and rather preferred it to the hard, dry earth, and pure mountain air. His great rolling eyes first located the rich mineral, and, poising himself for an instant, down he went like an arrow until he touched bottom, where he clawed around with a vigor and persistency which were sure to show substantial results.

"When I gits down dar," said Jim, as he sat on the edge of the Enchanted Island resting himself, "I jes' opens my eyes, an' I see as well as you can. The water looks kinder yellor, but de gold looks yellor, an' so I'm sure to see it."

The negro always plunged in head-first.

"'Cause you see if I happen to strike de rocks, it'll be my head, an' den dar's no danger ob git-tin' hurt."

This was his philosophy.

Our friends had unmistakably found a prize, and it only remained for them to work it up. As Edwin was of comparatively little use, he occasionally roamed in the woods in search of game. He was careful not to stray far away, as there really was no necessity for doing so, and even if he failed in obtaining his food in this manner, the lake offered a good supply of fish, which was always at their disposal.

When the first night came, an inventory of their receipts was taken, and George Inwood was sure that they were several thousand dollars richer than at morning, and so expressed himself to his friends.

"Rather better earnings than we have yet made," he remarked, with some degree of complaisance, as the three sat in the cool of the evening, chatting and discussing the matter.

"Yes, I think we ought to be satisfied with that," replied Edwin.

"I isn't," was the sententious observation of Jim, as he quaffed his black clay pipe.

"And why not?" inquired George.

"'Cause I ain't, dat's de reason. In de fu'st place, dat ain't 'nough gold, an' in de next place, it's too little, an' den we orter git more. Wait till I gits to work to-morrer, an' I'll show you sumfin'. Dar's a sort ob ginerall looseness dat I hab to git frough me, afore I can do what I orter."

"Well, I shall be satisfied if you only do as well as you have to-day."

"I must do better to-morrer, an' I's goin' to."

There was a fear—a continued apprehension, which made our friends quite uneasy—that is, that some prowling band of hunters or miners might discover their secret. If such a dreaded contingency should occur, it would make a fearful time. Unrestrained by any fear of the law, and prompted by the great prompter of the majority of human actions, such a company would hesitate at no crime to secure the booty.

George Inwood's experience had taught him the value of money in this world's affairs, and he was resolutely determined to resist to the bitter end any encroachment upon their rights. There are some things more valuable than gold, but they are few, and it cannot be wondered that a man should feel some reluctance at parting with it.

Jim verified the boast that he made, for on the morrow he began work as soon as it was bright, and toiled with scarcely any intermission until nightfall, his net proceeds fully doubling those of the day before. Inwood, by this time, had managed to arrange a contrivance with the poles which materially assisted him. One of these being sharp-pointed, he was enabled to wrench off goodly-sized nuggets, while with another arrangement he was able to grapple and bring them to the surface. Still a third had a pan fastened to the end, by means of which he scooped up a large mass of sand, all flecked with gleaming points, and abounding with riches.

Edwin Inwood's principal occupation, aside from attending to the animals, was to wander through the surrounding woods on the lookout for white men, who, as will be easily understood, were more dreaded than anything else. On one occasion he discovered a party of five miners encamped within a mile. He instantly made all haste back and acquainted his friends with the startling fact.

Labor was suspended at once, the gold carefully concealed, and all three set themselves on the watch. The miners were prospecting, and were ignorant of the Enchanted Island and its history. They lingered for several days in the vicinity, and then, to the great relief of the Inwoods and Jim, they took their departure.

Week after week passed away, and still the little party toiled as unceasingly as ever; but when a month had come and gone they saw that the supply was giving out. Still, as all of us would have done under the circumstances, they kept to work as long as there was anything like a reward to be obtained for their labor.

But the end finally came, and they stopped work and took an account of stock. As nearly as George Inwood could calculate, they were the owners of something less than a hundred thousand dollars—all of it in *virgin gold*. They

certainly had reason to be satisfied with this, and all were, with the exception of Jim, who, of course, growled about it, and proposed that they should hunt up some more "Enchanted Islands" before going home; but then, had another proposed the same thing, he would have vehemently opposed it.

All the gold they could conveniently carry was distributed about their persons, and the rest was concealed among the saddles on the backs of their animals. The old mule was not honored with a particle, but carried the luggage and personal baggage.

All being ready the little party turned their faces toward San Francisco, and on a bright summer morning started homeward.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PERILS OF A NIGHT.

ONE hundred thousand dollars in gold, in one sense, is a comfortable sum, and yet, in another, it is the very reverse. A man who finds himself in possession of that amount, and attempts to carry it, will find that it weighs several hundred pounds, and is rather awkward to manage. If he tumbles a portion of the nuggets into his pantaloons pockets, their excessive weight is almost sure to send them through the bottom down into his boots, where they are certain to feel still more uncomfortable. If he flings the auriferous luggage over his shoulder, the burden is too great to be carried for any time; if the money is placed upon the strong back of a mule, there is the haunting terror of its being lost or stolen during some unguarded moment.

Perhaps the best thing that any of our readers can do with their hundred thousand dollars, is to put it in a strong safe, or in a good solvent bank, where it can be drawn out piecemeal and devoted to charitable objects; but it will be seen at once that neither of these plans were practicable for our friends while their cargo was *in transitu* for San Francisco, and when we say that they all felt uneasy, we but feebly express their feelings.

"I tell you if it was know'd what a load we's takin' frough de mountains, dere'd be some fo'ks dat would rather like to git 'quainted wid us," remarked Jim, as they toiled laboriously through the wild country.

"Yes; we may meet with strangers, and if so, we must be very carefnl that they don't suspect we have gold with us."

"Yes; I's been t'inkin' dat I orter caution you an' Ned 'bout keepin' a close mouf when strangers am 'bout."

"You needn't be afraid of me," replied Edwin. "If any one reveals it, I am sure it will be you."

The third night after leaving the Enchanted Island, they encamped in a rocky gorge, close by a small running stream, where immense precipitous walls rose on either hand, and at mid-day a twilight gloom rested upon the ground and stream. Fine, tender green grass was growing in profusion; and picketing the animals within ear-shot, the gold was removed with the saddles, and placed close to the campfire, where it could always be seen by every member of the party. They had a fine plump

bird shot, during the latter part of the afternoon, which Jim took in hand, and soon had sputtering and broiling over a small, brisk fire—"doing" it with a skill that would have tempted the appetite of the most fastidious epicure.

By the time this was disposed of, it was entirely dark, and the three gathered more closely about the fire, for there was a chillness in the air which made its warmth pleasant and grateful. Jim found solace in his inevitable pipe, while the brothers chatted as usual. George lay with his head upon the saddles containing the gold, Edwin sat near him, while Jim was upon the opposite side of the fire, half-sitting and half-reclining in his listlessness.

"Am dat a soft piller?" he asked, of the older brother.

"I can't say that it is," was the reply, "but it would be pretty hard work to sleep with my head on anything else, so long as I knew we had the gold with us."

"I s'pose when folks have a big lot of gold, they're apt to think a good 'eal about it. I never yet hefted dat 'ere pile. Jes' let me heft it."

The African passed over to where the three saddles lay, and Inwood having removed his head, picked them up, and held them suspended for a few moments.

"I tell you gold am purty heavy—"

The next instant, the whole pile dropped from his hand, the nuggets giving forth an unmistakable chink, for there before all stood a stranger, his appearance as sudden and unexpected as if he had risen from the very earth.

There were several bad things regarding the advent of this man. In the first place, he came at a moment when it was certain he had discovered that a large quantity of gold was in the possession of the little party. The words of the negro, and his sudden dropping of the riches, made it impossible that it should be otherwise.

And again, the stranger had an evil look. He was in the costume of a hunter, but his scowling features, keen eyes, low forehead, flat nose, and cunning expression were those of an outlaw from society—one whom it was exceedingly perilous to encounter, where the arm of the law was powerless to protect or to strike terror.

"Good-evening, friends," was the salutation, before the party had time to recover from their surprise and indignation.

"Good-evening," returned Inwood, who could not be rude even when under such great provocation.

"Like to know what *you* want?" demanded Jim, as he seated himself upon the saddles, and defiantly looked at the new-comer.

"Me?" grinned the other, as he also seated himself as coolly as if he were an invited guest. "I can't say that I want anything in particular. Happened to catch sight of your fire a little while ago, and I came down to see who you might be. Rather like your appearance."

"We're a company journeying alone," said George Inwood, "and wishing you good-speed, you will let us say that we prefer to remain alone, and therefore ask you to pass on."

This was rather a palpable hint, but there seemed no disposition upon the part of the

stranger to act upon it. He sat still a few moments, and then also produced a pipe, which he lit with an ember from the fire.

"My name is Muffin," said he, "and, as I told you a few minutes ago, I'm a hunter in this neighborhood. It isn't often that I see a white man, and when I do, I must stick to him and enjoy his society all I can. So, of course, I couldn't think of leaving you just yet."

It occurred to George Inwood that he had not only been discourteous, but had overdone matters altogether in manifesting such a prompt anxiety to get rid of Muffin, and he now attempted an impossible thing—namely, to undo his mistake.

"Are you alone?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir; nobody goes with me. I live alone in these woods, except when I meet a friend, as I have met you last night; but I never stay with them long, so you needn't be anxious regarding me, 'cause I'll leave you as soon as it is daylight."

This was intended to be reassuring, but it was anything but that, and made Inwood more uneasy than ever. His great fear was that there were others close at hand, and the darkness, gloom, and solitude gave opportunity for treachery. He did not see how he could rid himself of his dangerous visitor; but Jim now spoke up:

"See here, Mr. Buffin, I wants to ax you a question."

"I am at your service, sir."

"Did you 'serbe me when I dropped dese saddles?"

"I noticed that you let something fall as I came up, but I didn't pay attention. It was no concern of mine, you know."

"You didn't t'ink—dat is, you don't t'ink dere be any gold about dat?"

"Course not; why should I think so?"

"All right, Mr. Buffer, I doesn't want you to t'ink so—jes' member dat if you please."

George Inwood was greatly irritated, but there was such an air of simplicity about what Jim said, that it was impossible not to be amused. When the African received the reply of Mr. Muffin, he seemed satisfied, and seated himself upon the saddles.

George saw that their visitor understood the precise condition of affairs, and that there was no further use of attempting concealment.

"I s'pose you're miners?" remarked Mr. Muffin, by way of initiating the conversation.

"Yes; we have spent several months among the mountains, part the time hunting and part the time mining."

"What luck?"

"Quite good I may say; we have toiled long and hard, and have made pretty good wages—so much, that we have concluded to return home."

"Live in California?"

"No; our home is in the Empire State, where I hope we shall shortly be."

"Going to San Francisco?"

Inwood answered in the affirmative, and then concluded that it was about time he asked a few questions.

"Where are your friends?"

But Mr. Muffin was too sharp to be taken off

his guard, and with a meaning smile upon his evil countenance, he said:

"The nearest I've got, I believe, are a couple of brothers in Sacramento City."

"You hunt alone, do you?"

"I have done so for nigh onto five years—not quite that, howsumever."

"That is a singular way of managing one's affairs. A man isn't apt to act in that manner unless he has a strong motive for doing so."

"What might be a chap's motives?" demanded the other, removing his pipe and glaring upon the speaker with an ugly look.

"Sometimes a man has a natural taste for solitude, but it more generally happens that he leaves society for society's own good."

"Do you mean to 'sinate that that's what I've done?"

"I don't insinuate anything, because I know nothing about you; but I strongly suspect that you are some scamp who dare not return to the society of your people on account of crimes you have committed against them."

Mr. Muffin looked very angry, and Jim had strong hopes that he would say or attempt something bad, for he was eager to lay his hands upon him; but their visitor evidently concluded it unsafe to let his angry passions rise just then, and so held his peace, and smoked his pipe harder than ever.

"When a man addresses me as I have addressed you," said Inwood, "I quietly leave his company, and have nothing more to do with him."

"Dat so," added Jim, beginning to lose all patience at the impudence of their visitor. "If you know what's best for yourself, you'll *c'lar out*."

Mr. Muffin smoked in silence a few moments longer, and then arose to his feet. Glaring first at Inwood, and then at Jim, he shook his fist at each, and said:

"I'll go, but you'll hear from me before long. *You haven't seen the last of me.*"

And the next moment he strode off in the darkness.

The miners waited until they were sure of being alone, when George said:

"I'm sorry we saw anything of that man—he has had his eyes on our gold, and has made up his mind to have it."

"Yes; I'm sorry you told him about it," gravely remarked Jim.

"I think *you* were the first to give him the hint."

"How dat?" inquired the African, with profound amazement.

"He saw you drop the saddles, and heard you speak about them containing gold."

"I know dat, but he told me he didn't t'ink dere were any gold dere, while you tole him dat we had had purty good luck, an' had got 'siderable."

"However, there is no need of disputing about it, Jim; he had made up his mind to rob us of that gold, if he had to cut our throats to do it, and the question with us is, how are we to prevent it?"

"The camp-fire has burned down pretty low," said Inwood. "Let's pick up our traps and change our quarters."

"No doubt he is watching us."

"What if he is? It is so dark that we can give him the slip."

The suggestion of the boy seemed to be the best under the circumstances, and the two concluded to act upon it at once. Jim quietly stole down the bank of the stream, slipped the lariats by which the animals were held, and then led them about half a mile down the rocky bed of the brook, several times stumbling and bruising himself. Finally he reached a spot which *felt right*, where he tethered them, and returned to the brothers, who were rather impatiently awaiting him.

"I's found a place," said he; "you needn't tumble down more nor a dozen times in gittin' dere."

The gold was burdensome, but they distributed it among themselves, the African taking about nine tenths, and George very nearly all that remained. They then began picking their way down the stream, being guided almost entirely by the sense of touch. The negro's remarkable memory of places was found to assist them a great deal. George kept so close to him that he could touch him at any moment with his outstretched arms, while Edwin did touch his brother continually to make sure that he was not losing him. They stumbled quite often, and bruised themselves considerably, but not enough to affect their progress in any degree, and at the end of something over an hour, Jim suddenly came to a standstill, with the whispered exclamation:

"*Here we is!*"

The brothers strained their eyes, but in vain; for the darkness was too great for them to perceive anything. The faint neigh of a horse, however, told them that Jim was not mistaken.

"Here we stays till mornin'," said the latter, "an' if Mr. Buffalo finds us, he'll have to have purty sharp eyes."

"I think we are safe, unless we have been followed. Be careful and speak in low tones, and say only the words that are necessary. Have you got your blankets and everything with you?"

Edwin replied in the affirmative, but the negro burst into a low, hearty laugh.

"What do you s'pose I've done?" he asked.

Of course neither could answer his question.

"I've gone an' left my gun up dere by de camp-fire."

"Never mind, let it go," said George; "we cannot be a great ways from home, and we can get along without it."

"No, *sah!* can't do widout dat. S'pose Mr. Bufton brings down a party of men to-morrer mornin'—where'll you be den?"

There was reason in this question, and George added:

"We may need it, but you run a great risk in going back. They may be there, and you must take great care that you are not seen."

"Yah, yah, won't see much ob me—dark a colored man as I am, on such a dark night, ain't apt to be generally visible, an' what dey can see ob me, dey'r' welcome to see."

But Jim promised extra caution, and started on the back track. The trouble was that he

was in a great hurry; for, by this time, the night was well advanced, and he was desirous of securing his usual allowance of sleep. It was not such a difficult matter for him to make his way, as he had become pretty well acquainted with the ground, and the rippling brook was an infallible guide, if he were dubious for a single moment.

It seemed a long time before he came upon the dull embers of the fire, which were smoldering so low as to be hardly visible at any distance; but fortunately, Jim discovered it while several rods distant.

At this instant, he recalled that he had promised his young friend to be careful, and he therefore hesitated and took a survey as well as he could under the circumstances. Nothing was seen to arouse suspicion, and he was about to advance, when the embers assumed a glow so sudden and bright as to startle and alarm him.

Stepping back he watched it intently, and a moment later saw a shadowy form pass in front of it, and then two others, although neither of them was heard to say a word.

"So you're dere, be you?" muttered Jim, as he sunk down to the earth to watch his opportunity; "but you don't find us, an' don't see noffin' ob de gold."

Prudence would have dictated to the negro to withdraw from the presence of such danger; but he placed too great a value upon his rifle to allow it to leave his hands in this unquestioned manner. He remembered while they were busy making their preparations, that he had laid it down to one side, where as yet Mr. Muffin and his friends had seen nothing of it.

Jim was several yards from the brook, where he could hear any words spoken. By-and-by one of the men seemed to become very impatient, and, with a profane expletive, said:

"What's the use? They've given you the slip, and we might as well go back again."

"Where've they gone?" asked another.

"A pretty question to ask! I s'pose you think we can see 'em a dozen miles off on such a bright moonlight night as this."

This remark was greeted with derisive laughter by the others, and the one propounding the question, no doubt, was greatly discomfited thereby. But at this point, Jim began to grow apprehensive about his rifle, and commenced crawling toward the spot where he had left it upon the ground.

The African's complexion was greatly in his favor, and united with the extreme darkness of the night, secured his safety so long as he kept out of the light of the fire. Unfortunately this had been rekindled by one of the strangers, so that the attempt was attended with considerable risk.

Still Jim crept stealthily forward, and was already groping over the ground in search of his weapon, when it was suddenly snatched from the earth, and a voice called out:

"Helloa! here's a gun, anyhow. They left in such a hurry that they forgot to take that with 'em, an' I guess—"

The speaker was suddenly prostrated by a powerful blow, and the weapon violently wrenched from his grasp.

"Quick! there's one of 'em!" was the lusty

cry of the man, as he staggered to his feet. The others were bewildered by the unexpected assault, but they attempted a pursuit, rushing off blindly in the darkness in a direction almost opposite to the right one.

"Yaw! yaw!" chuckled Jim, as he stumbled and hurried down the bed of the stream. "Won't have to run fur to git away from the likes ob you."

A half-hour later the anxious brothers were relieved by the appearance of Jim among them, when he gleefully recounted his adventure, quite jubilant at his success.

"Won't they follow you?" inquired Edwin.

"Dey undertook dat, but dey went de wrong way."

"But they may now go the right one."

"How dey know dat?"

"We are not sure that they have any suspicion of the truth," said George, "but they would naturally suspect that we had followed the course of the brook."

"Let 'em foller," was the reply of the African, "an' if dey do so, dey might tumble ober us widout seeing us."

"Do you know how many there are?"

"See'd t'ree ob 'em, an' I t'ink dey was more around."

"I don't fear that so much, as that they may encamp near us, and make an attack in the morning."

"We must move off as soon as it is daylight," said Edwin, "and get all the start we can before they discover us."

Edwin and Jim finally lay down in their blankets and went to sleep, while George maintained watch. He was too nervous and troubled to feel any desire for slumber, and too anxious to get out of this dangerous neighborhood to allow any advantage to escape him.

More than once, through the lonely hours of the night, he was sure he heard whisperings and footsteps, and as often he raised the hammer of his rifle, and endeavored to pierce the Cimmerian gloom. The faint neigh of one of the animals sent a thrill of apprehension through him, and he was certain the outlaws were among them, but nothing further was heard, and, at the first streak of light he aroused his friends, and told them they must start at once.

Their preparations required but a few moments, when they resumed their march. They found that the face of the country materially changed as they advanced, and they made much more rapid progress than they had dared to hope.

They were constantly looking back, and once Jim's keen eyes were positive that he detected a number of men on a distant eminence, evidently watching them; but nothing more was seen of their enemies, and when they encamped at night, they were confident that none but the All-seeing Eye observed them.

CHAPTER XV.

A JOYFUL SURPRISE.

It was toward the close of a warm summer day, that our friends drew rein in a grove within sight of the residence of Mr. Underwood, in precisely the same spot that they had encamped a number of weeks before.

George Inwood was rather shabby in his appearance, but he determined to call upon Marian, and have a chat with her before he returned East. He washed himself in a running brook, combed out his hair and whiskers, brushed his clothes, and having made himself as presentable as possible under the circumstances, he told his friends that perhaps he would not return until late in the evening, and that they were by no means to wait for him.

There was a faint moon, as he came up the path made by the passage of many animals, and he could discover no human beings near the house. He missed the voice of Marian, but he knew she was there, and that in a few moments more he would be sitting face to face with her.

Walking forward, he stepped upon the long, low porch which ran along the entire front of the house, and, seeing no bell near, or knocker upon the open door, he rapped it smartly with his knuckles, and then stepped back and endeavored to feel cool and unconcerned.

In a moment a servant appeared, and he said:

"Is Miss Underwood in?"

"¿Pregunta V. par alguno?"

Not understanding Spanish, Inwood stood for a moment embarrassed and silent.

"¿Acerca de quien quiere V. in formarse? A quien bresca V.?" said the female, quite excitedly.

Seeing little probability of coming to an understanding, Inwood repeated the words, "Miss Marian Underwood," and then walked into a low, broad hall. The servant immediately opened a door on his right, and the young man walked into a broad, well-furnished room. Taking his seat on a sofa, which he knew had been brought from the East, he awaited the coming of whomsoever chose to answer his summons.

He had waited scarcely a minute, when a light step caught his ear, and, looking up, Marian stood before him. He saw at once she did not recognize him in the dim light, and he concluded not to undeceive her for a moment. Rising, and bowing profoundly, he lowered his voice and asked:

"Have I the honor to address Miss Marian Underwood?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply, as she still remained standing.

"I am from the East: Mr. Inwood desires you to receive his kindest wishes."

"Ah! you are acquainted with him?" she said, with great vivacity, exceedingly inspiring to the listener, as she seated herself in front of him.

"When did you leave New York?"

"Several months ago; I am on my return now."

"Is he well?"

"Never better."

"I am glad to hear it, indeed, as father will be."

"His father died last autumn—Inwood was compelled to leave college, as he found himself penniless."

"Is it possible? May I ask what he is doing now?"

"Nothing at all."

"I wondered that he never wrote to us."

"I remember very well seeing him put a letter in the office, addressed to you."

"Indeed, I never received it; he must have thought strange that I never answered it."

"However, he went to California."

She gave a start.

"And never inquired after us?"

"Yes; he sought your home out with great difficulty, and, Miss Marian Underwood, he sits talking with you this minute."

There was a start, and a slight scream, but no fainting. Sensible ladies don't faint at such times. The light of the lamp was made instantly brighter, and Marian, all trembling with excitement, was seated beside George, looking earnestly in his face.

"Can it be possible?" she asked, half smiling and half weeping. "I am really glad to see you."

"And I am to see you."

But it is becoming delicate ground, and we will retire.

Our friends remained several days at Mr. Underwood's, during which Jim explained that his famous "gold trick" consisted in looking upon an opponent as a *gold mine*, and using his pick accordingly, and George, having received the strongest confirmation of the true, womanly love of Marian for himself, he revealed to her the wonderful success which he had met among the mountains, with the Enchanted Island, and he assured her of his intention to complete his preparatory course, and enter his chosen field—the sacred ministry.

When they parted they were betrothed, and their future was painted in the roseate colors of hope and youth.

A few days later, as the steamer *El Dorado* steamed through the Golden gate, down the great Pacific, she carried among her motley passengers, the three who have occupied so prominent a part in these pages. The trip to New York was made safely and pleasantly, and without any incident worthy of record.

Edwin, as a matter of course, resumed his studies, and Jim Tubbs settled down with his old mother, whom he had left behind, and who had sustained herself during his absence by weak tea, a strong pipe, and tremendous washing and ironing.

George carried out his intentions in every respect; the debts due his creditors, with interest, were paid to the last cent; and he and his wife are located in the Pacific Slope, in the noble young State of California, engaged heart and hand in their great Master's work.

THE END.

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